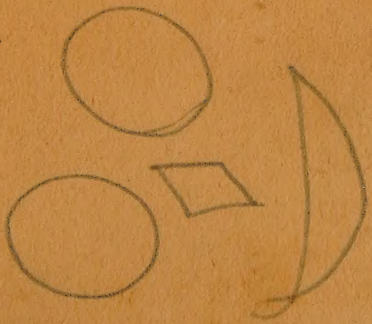
The CRIMSON BANNER

From Grandma Lockwood

Dec. 25, 1929

To

Lowell Searer



THE CRIMSON BANNER

A Story of College Baseball

BY

WILLIAM D. MOFFAT
Author of "A Schoolboy's Honor," "The County Pennant," Dirkman's Luck," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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THE CRIMSON BANNER

CHAPTER I

A SINGULAR LETTER

ONE pleasant evening during the first week in April I left my room in Colver Hall, and started across the campus of Belmont College toward the main street of the town. As I approached the gateway at the entrance to the grounds, I noticed several of the boys, sitting upon and around the two large cannons that stood on either side of the gateway, mounted upon their old fashioned iron carriages.

These old cannons were landmarks of the college, and dear to the heart of every inmate. Many years before they had been discovered by a rambling party of students in a deserted part of the hilly country about ten miles west of Belmont. It was believed that they had been left there by a section of the army during the war of 1812. However that might be, they were appropriated and dragged home to the college, where they were enthusiastically adopted by the students, and soon became favorite lounging posts. Almost every warm afternoon or evening would find

several fellows perched on the old artillery or seated near by, reading, chatting, or singing college songs.

Through the deepening twilight I recognized two of my classmates leaning against one of the cannon.

"Hello, Miller," I called out, "where is Toney Larcom?"

"Down by the lake, I think," was the answer. "He was here about twenty minutes ago, and said he was going to the boat house to look after his canoe."

Retracing my steps, I hurried around old Burke Hall, the main building of the college, and crossed the back quadrangle. Then, leaving the circuitous path to the boat house, I struck out on a straight line down through the underbrush toward the shore of the lake. There I stood a moment, close to the dock, looking out over the water.

The dusk prevented my seeing further than fifty yards ahead, and in that space no sign of Tony's boat appeared, so, putting my hands to my mouth, I called out at the top of my voice,

"Hello, Tony Larcom!"

The cry rang out over the quiet sheet of water, and echoed back from the rugged sides of Mount Bell, which loomed up in the evening sky beyond the lake.

Receiving no reply, I repeated my call several times with increasing force.

Suddenly a queer chuckling noise sounded almost immediately beside me, and peering through the bushes, I saw the face of Tony Larcom not four feet in front

of me. He was seated quietly in his canoe, and with difficulty repressing his laughter.

"Did you speak?" he asked, straightening his face into an expression of gravity, when he found he had been discovered.

"Oh, no," I answered sarcastically. "I was only breathing hard. What do you mean by sitting there without a word while I was shouting myself hoarse?"

"Why, I didn't recognize you at first, Harry. You had your mouth open so wide I couldn't see you at all. What do you want?"

"Do you realize the fact that there is to be a mass meeting of the college in the Latin room at half past seven to consider baseball matters, and that you, as secretary of the association, must be there?"

"I do," said Tony.

"Then what are you doing down here by the lake? I've been looking all over for you, and was afraid you were going to play us your old trick of forgetting all about an important engagement."

"Oh, no, not this time. I wouldn't miss the mass meeting for the world. There was plenty of time, and I wanted to see how my canoe had stood the winter, so I came down to try her on the water. She will be all right with a little paint. Give me a hand here and help me get her out."

Tony paddled along toward the boat house, while I accompanied him, pushing my way through the bushes that grew thickly by the water's edge.

When we had reached the dock I helped him drag out the canoe and carry it into the boat house.

As he made it fast to the wall, Tony remarked.

"There will be something besides baseball to interest the boys tonight. I have a letter to read."

"From whom?"

"From Park College."

"What about?"

"Read it and see," said Tony, taking a letter from his pocket and handing it to me.

I opened it, and, standing in the light of the single oil lamp fastened against the wall, I read as follows:

To the Students of Belmont College:

On a number of occasions during late years your attention has been called to the claims of Park College to the cannons which stand upon your campus. Enough evidence has been produced to convince an unprejudiced mind of our right of ownership of said cannons, but this evidence has in every case been rejected by you. We, the students of Park College, have at length decided to take a positive stand in the matter, and, accordingly, submit to you this formal demand for the surrender of the cannons to us. Should this be disregarded, we shall take more active steps to secure our rights. We trust this will secure your immediate attention, and await the favor of your reply.

I looked up in amazement. Tony winked.

"How is that for a game of bluff?' he asked.

"What in the world do they mean by 'active steps'?" I asked.

"I don't know. Legal proceedings would be simply absurd. My idea is that they think because their

college is a trifle larger than ours that they can bully us. They have always wanted the cannons, you know."

"Yes, but I thought they had given up all claims several years ago when the subject was thoroughly discussed in the college papers. You remember, they claimed that the cannons were in their country, two miles from Berkeley, and so belonged to them. But it was decided then that they belonged to nobody, and as our students had found them, they were ours by right of treasure trove as well as forty years' possession."

"Yes, but you know how it is in college: a new batch of students comes in and revives old sores. Now they are at it again, and now it is *our* business to meet them as it was our predecessor's."

"Well, we will, and with a vengeance, too, if necessary. Did you show the letter to Edwards?"

Edwards was the managing editor of the college paper, the *Belmont Chronicle*.

"No; I received it only two hours ago in the late afternoon mail. Come up to Burke Hall, and we will have some fun with it. Watch the sensation when I read it to the boys in the mass meeting.

Closing the side door of the boat house, Tony padlocked it, and we started back again toward the campus.

"Have you seen Ray Wendell this afternoon?" I asked.

"No; but of course he will be on hand. What

would a baseball meeting be without Ray Wendell? By the way, what a scare he gave me last month when he hinted about resigning the captaincy."

"That was a queer notion. What started it, I wonder?"

"He said he was afraid it would interfere with his studies, especially his preparation for his final examinations."

"Bosh!"

"Well, you know he is working for one of the honorary orations at commencement, and he said he would have to work hard, for there is to be a good deal of competition this year."

"Nonsense, Wendell is sure of an oration, and probably the valedictory. There isn't a smarter man in the Senior class. There is no reason why baseball should interfere at all."

"Certainly not. If we are to have a winning team this year it will only be with Ray Wendell as captain —and so I told him. I showed him that all the fellows looked to him, and the college reputation rested in his hands. That soon brought him to terms, and he has never mentioned the matter since. I can't help thinking, however, that there was more back of that freak of his than he said."

"He knows as well as the rest of us how necessary he is to the nine," I rejoined.

"And for that very reason I think something must have influenced him. At first I thought perhaps his father had asked him to give up baseball, but then

I remembered that Mr. Wendell always seemed to be as proud of Ray's athletics as he was of his high rank in his class. Still, I don't care, now that he has let the matter drop."

"What is that crowd doing outside of Burke Hall?" I asked. "Do you suppose that old Ferguson has forgotten to unlock the Latin room door?"

"Looks like it," said Tony. "Still he must be there, for the windows are bright. He must be lighting up now."

The question was promptly settled, for, while we were speaking there was a sudden outburst of cheers, and the crowd surged into the building. The doors had evidently just been opened.

Pandemonium reigned within as we entered. The room was crowded to suffocation with a noisy, jostling mass of students. Every seat was full, and many of the boys were standing along the side walls. The din was almost deafening. Suddenly Tony Larcom's presence was detected and immediately his name was on every one's lips.

"There's Tony. Take the chair, Tony. Pass him up to the platform, fellows."

He was seized unceremoniously by a dozen pairs of hands, and half dragged, half carried, to the desk. There he stood a moment, laughing and kicking, until he was released, when he sobered down, took out his note book, and seated himself at a small desk in front of the platform, ready for business.

I made my way to the front row where Dick Palmer

had reserved a place for me with considerable difficulty, by sitting in one seat and putting his feet in the next one.

At this moment Clinton Edwards, who had been asked by Tony to open the meeting, went upon the platform and summoned the crowd to order by hammering on the desk with a heavy ruler.

As all were intensely interested in the subject for which the meeting was called, the room soon became perfectly still.

CHAPTER II

SHALL WE JOIN THE LEAGUE?

"GENTLEMEN," began Clinton Edwards, "as you are all aware, this meeting has been called for the purpose of considering baseball matters. At the close of last year's season the nine held its customary annual meeting, and the usual elections of secretary and captain were made for the ensuing year. It now remains with you to approve and ratify these elections, and, in that event, the captain, as has been our custom heretofore, becomes also president of the association. The names of these officers were announced in the *Chronicle* at the time of their election, as you doubtless remember, but I will repeat them. Mr. Larcom was elected secretary ——"

The speaker paused a moment, when some one in the back of the room called out, "I forbid the banns!"

The meeting was in an uproar at this. Laughter, stamping of feet, and shouts of "Bully boy!" "Hi, hi for Tony!" threatened to destroy the secretary's gravity. Rising, note book in hand, he said,

"Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of information. Do I enter these remarks in the minutes?"

Edwards, ignoring the point, continued:

"The captaincy, which was made vacant by the graduation of Mr. Terry, was filled by the election of Mr. Wendell."

There was now a long and uproarious burst of applause. Cheer followed cheer as the name was announced.

A more popular man than Ray Wendell rarely passed through Belmont College. Bright and industrious in his studies, active and strong in athletics, generous, good humored, and with agreeable and fascinating manners Ray had been my ideal of a college man since Freshman year.

As he rose modestly from his seat in answer to the repeated cheers, I thought I had never seen him look handsomer. His tall, graceful figure and fine face never appeared to better advantage than at that moment as he blushingly acknowledged the applause that greeted his name.

Several times he attempted to speak, but the continued cheering discouraged his effort. At length silence was obtained, when Ray said smilingly, and quickly turning attention from himself:

"Gentlemen, you forget that you have not yet decided to be represented in the Berkshire League. You have first to vote on the question: do we send out a nine?"

"We scarcely need put that question," said a student, as Ray sat down. "It has been only a form in past years, and I move, therefore, Mr. Chairman, that we approve these elections ——"

"One moment, Mr. Chairman," broke in a voice from the back of the room.

"Mr. Pratt has the floor," said Edwards.

"I have finished," said Pratt. "My motion is before the meeting."

It was seconded at once by a dozen voices. Then the speaker at the back of the room rose slowly. It was Len Howard, a Senior, and a prominent lawn tennis player. He looked and acted as if he had a hard and ugly task before him.

"Have I the floor now?" he asked.

"You have," answered Edwards.

"Then before putting this question I beg to say a few words," and Howard settled himself more firmly on his feet, while most of us looked at him in surprise.

"I am a warm admirer of baseball, as warm an admirer as there is in college. But I am also a warm admirer of tennis, and it is in behalf of this latter game that I want to speak. I beg to call attention to the respective records of Belmont College in these two sports. Year before last our baseball team amounted to little — stood third in the League, last year we were again third, and this year we have but three players of the old nine left us, and prospects of a still poorer record. Lawn tennis, on the other hand, without any encouragement from the college, has grown steadily in popularity and success, and today it can send crack players to the intercollegiate tournaments which take place in May. Its prospects are

bright, and it deserves the college support. Now, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, should we not cultivate the sport in which we stand the best show of success? Last year the assistance of the college was promised to tennis, but the funds were appropriated by the ball team, or at least the ball team used up all the money the college could contribute, and with the poor results just mentioned. As the college apparently will not extend its support to both, and it comes to a choice between tennis and baseball, I think we ought to give tennis the show it deserves for one year at least. I think we ought to support tennis with our funds, and not join the Berkshire Baseball League this year."

Ray Wendell sprang up, his face flushed and his eyes flashing.

"Mr. Chairman, if this represents the sentiments of the college toward baseball — if this echoes the feelings of even one tenth of the students, I resign from the nine immediately."

There was a hush of several seconds' duration, during which the rest of us sat confounded with amazement at the audacity of Howard. Suddenly the silence was broken.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tony Larcom, and his chair toppled over backward, precipitating him with a crash upon the floor.

Then arose an uproar on all sides. Fully three dozen fellows were shouting and gesticulating wildly to attract the attention and recognition of the chairman.

Tony, unmindful of his ridiculous position, and intent upon being heard, scrambled to his knees, and, waving his arms beseechingly at the chairman, roared out at the top of his voice:

"Mr. Chairman, have I the floor? Let me have the floor — Mr. Chairman, please let me have the floor for just five minutes."

Dick Palmer reached forward as well as he could for laughter, and touching Tony said,

"I should think you had got enough of the floor, Tony. You've just had a whole back full of it."

Tony, however, did not hear him, but continued his appeals to the chairman. At length Edwards, who had been standing puzzled in the midst of the confusion, caught Tony's eye, and brought down his ruler with a bang.

"Mr. Larcom has the floor," he called out. The rest subsided with some difficulty, and Tony was left master of the field for a time.

He rose hastily and brushed off his clothes. Then, buttoning up his coat, he planted himself in front of his desk and launched out.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen: the words we have just heard are a disgrace to any son of Belmont College. What does Mr. Howard mean by calling baseball to account? Have we a record to be ashamed of? True, we have been unfortunate in the last two years — every college has its bad spells — but why doesn't Mr. Howard go back further? Doesn't the gentleman remember that Belmont was the first college

to win the Crimson Banner when it was made the trophy of the Berkshire League twelve years ago? Doesn't he remember that Belmont held that banner for five consecutive years, lost it for three years, and then won it for two years more — that the name of the Belmont team has, therefore, seven times out of twelve been inscribed upon that banner in letters of gold? (Cheers.) And why did we lose last year? Not because we had a poor nine, but because it was not well handled. Every honest minded man in this room knows that we would have won the banner had we been headed by the efficient captain who leads us now. (Cheers.) And yet this gentleman wishes us to relinquish the game for a year. Does he realize that we thereby lay ourselves open to being refused admission to the League when we want to get back, and that Park College for one would be only too glad to get a chance to shut us out? Relinquish our nine? Never! I would rather lose my right hand than our nine. The speech we have just listened to is an insult to every patriotic man in college, and a double insult to the members of our old nine, and the able captain whose election we are here to ratify."

Immediately at the close of Tony's speech, and while the applause was still sounding, Dick Palmer rose and tried to gain a hearing, but I caught him by the coat.

"Sit down," I whispered. "Don't you see Elton is on the floor? He will use Howard up in two minutes."

My hint was quickly taken by Dick, for Elton was

one of the clearest thinkers in college, and had an established reputation as a speaker. He commanded universal respect in mass meetings, and consequently there was an expectant hush as he began to speak.

"Mr. Chairman, under some circumstances such a speech as Mr. Howard's might pass unnoticed. It certainly can have no weight with us now, nor in any way affect the motion. But it affords an opportunity of saying a few words concerning the relative positions of baseball and lawn tennis in the college.

"There is no college tennis association like our baseball association. The baseball grounds and appurtenances belong to us, have been purchased by money contributed by us, and are conducted by officers elected by us. It is a child of the college — the pet child — and its record in the past shows how well it has repaid our interest in it. Tennis, on the other hand, is of individual interest in the college, and the tennis courts here are the private property of the clubs that play upon them. Some of these clubs exclude all from playing on their courts except their own members. I don't criticise this. The courts are private property, but for this very reason the college cannot be expected to support tennis. What Mr. Howard says about the funds last year is not true. The truth is that the question was raised about a college appropriation of money to tennis, and most of the tennis clubs *rejected the idea,* prefering to pay their own expenses and run their own courts. Only one or two clubs wanted col-

lege assistance and support, and Mr. Howard *is a member of one of these clubs.*

"Again when our ball nine is successful, the Crimson Banner, the trophy of victory, comes to the college, and every student feels a share of the glory. Victory in tennis is of individual interest, and appeals chiefly to individual vanity. It means a silver cup for a man, or perhaps two men. The college gains little glory by it except in the most individual way. Now, it is well known that the gentleman who made this speech, is a strong tennis player. If then he wishes the college at large to back him in competing for a prize in the coming tournament, instead of his own club, as has been the custom in the past, well and good. We can consider the matter, though it would not be in order at a baseball meeting. But if he proposes that we shall relinquish our ball nine in order to devote our money to the purpose of assisting him to secure a prize cup, then I feel compelled to say that I for one can find a better way of spending my cash."

As Elton finished, Howard made several movements as if he would rise to speak, but several of his companions were urging him to keep still, and at length, influenced by their advice, he sank back and remained quiet.

Then rose on all sides the cry of "Question! Question!"

Edwards responded:

"Gentlemen, the question is called for, and will be

put. All in favor of Mr. Pratt's motion that will approve and ratify these elections say aye."

There was a loud roar of assent.

"All opposed, by the contrary sign."

There was no sound. Howard sat sullen and silent, gazing at the floor.

"The motion is carried, and Mr. Wendell is therefore elected president of the Association.

Edwards laid down the ruler, and surrendering the chair, descended from the platform.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW PRESIDENT

RAY WENDELL received an ovation as he took the chair. Prolonged cheering greeted him, accompanied by cries of "Speech! Speech!" When the noise had subsided, Ray began:

"Gentlemen, I have no speech, nor, unless I am much mistaken, do you want one. I thank you most sincerely for your kindness, and promise you in behalf of the nine that we will strive very hard to deserve your interest. This is speech enough, I am sure.

"Of course you want to know what I think of our prospects in baseball this year, and accordingly I say here to-night what I have said to many of you personally — that I consider our chances very good. It is true that we have only three of our old nine left, but the material which we have to choose from in the class nines is good this year, and we ought to have a fine team.

"Now as to the condition of the treasury — I have been informed by the secretary that the funds of the Association are almost exhausted. Will Mr. Larcom report on this? What is the exact balance in the treasury?"

Tony turned over the pages of his note book and figured busily for several seconds.

"There is a cash balance of $39.50," he finally called out.

"You can see from this," continued Ray, "that the usual contribution list will have to be started. You will all hear later from Mr. Larcom concerning this, and I hope we can look for as generous support as in previous years, for the nine needs an almost complete new outfit, and a number of repairs will have to be made at the ball grounds, to say nothing of the pay of the janitor and assistants at the club house, and the expenses of our baseball tour."

At this moment Alfred Carter, the leader of the College Glee Club, took the floor and said:

"Mr. President, I want to offer the services of the Glee Club for the benefit of the team. I have made arrangements to give a concert just before the Easter vacation — that is, in about ten days, the proceeds of which are to go to the baseball association. The concert will be given in the large examination hall up stairs, and," he added, with a smile, "all members of the college are cordially invited to attend — price 50 cents per head."

Carter sat down amidst a great stamping and clapping of hands.

Ray answered immediately:

"This is a most unexpected favor, Mr. Carter, and I thank you sincerely in behalf of the Association for this benefit, which, I am sure, will go a great way

towards supplying the deficiency in our treasury. Is there any further business before the meeting?"

"Mr. President," asked Elton, "when does the convention meet this year?"

"I am forced to say that I do not know as yet. For some reason no word has reached me from the secretary of the League, Mr. Slade of Halford College, although it is much later than the usual date for sending such notifications. Has Mr. Larcom received any word today?"

"No, sir," answered Tony.

"I shall probably hear tomorrow, and it is more than likely that the convention will be held on some day in the early part of next week. As soon as definite notice reaches us, your representative will go on to Berkeley, and a full account of the business of that meeting will be reported in the *Chronicle*. This is as complete information as I am able to give on the subject this evening. Is there any other business? If not, the ——"

"Mr. President," interrupted Tony, "may I have one moment? I have no baseball business to bring before the meeting, but I have received today a letter which is addressed to the 'students of Belmont College,' so I presume that this is the time and place to read it. Am I in order?"

Ray nodded.

"It is from Park College," added Tony, taking from his pocket the letter which I had read down at the boat house.

I watched the faces about me with interest, and I shall never forget the rapid changes of expression that passed over them — first curiosity, then eager attention, astonishment, anger, and finally scornful amusement, as the challenging letter was finished.

When Tony sat down, there was a chorus of howls, accompanied by various exclamations such as "What cheek! Want our cannons, do they? What are they going to do about it? Tell them to come and get them! Maybe they'd better ask for the whole town! ——"

Ray hammered on the desk.

"You have heard the letter, gentlemen. What shall we do with it?"

A sharp discussion followed. Some were in favor of answering it with a heated reply, challenging Park College to do their worst, whatever that might be, but the majority were of the conviction that any notice of the letter at all would be unwise.

"Mr. President," exclaimed one of the latter, "I move we lay it on the table — *permanently.*"

"I have an amendment to offer," said Elton. "I move we lay it under the table. There is a waste basket there."

"These motions are out of order. They have not been seconded," said Ray.

"Then I don't make any motion," said Elton, rising again. "I merely suggest that the best way to treat such a letter as this is to ignore it utterly."

All were coming around to this view of the matter,

so that when Ray asked again. Gentlemen, what action shall we take in reference to this letter?" no one spoke.

Ray looked about for several seconds. "There being no motion, the matter is dropped," he said. "If there is no further business the meeting is adjourned."

Immediately there was a roar of mingled conversation, whistling, and shuffling of feet as the meeting broke up, and the crowd pressed out through the large double doors.

When the room was nearly empty, and just as I was passing out, Ray Wendell, who was still standing at the platform, and talking with Tony Larcom, called out,

"Hullo, Elder, wait a minute."

I turned around, and, as I walked back, Ray said,

"We were just speaking about you, Harry. You know each college sends three delegates to the convention — the president and secretary of the Association, and a member of the nine. I have selected you to go with Tony Larcom and myself. What do you say?"

"Only too glad," I answered; "but how about Dick Palmer? I don't want to crowd him out if he wants to go. You know, he has been a member of the nine as long as I have."

"Oh, that is all right. You have the advantage because you were a regular member of the nine from the start, while Dick was only substitute year before last. I have spoken to him, and he acknowledges that you have the choice by all odds."

"All right," I said, "I can go next week.

"I don't know yet for sure when it will be, as I said in the meeting. It is curious I haven't received a word. I ought to have heard long ago. If I don't get a letter tomorrow morning I will telegraph to Slade."

"Well, a few hours' warning is enough for me," I answered. "Good meeting tonight, wasn't it? Lots of excitement and enthusiasm."

"Yes," said Tony, "and what puzzled me more than anything else was Len Howard. No wonder I fell flat. I was simply paralyzed. He must have been crazy to make such a proposition."

"Perhaps," said I, looking at Ray, "he was trying to work off a grudge he has had against you ever since you went out one Saturday afternoon last month and beat him in tennis on his own court."

"Oh, I don't think there was anything personal in it. I don't think Howard nurses any grudge against me."

"Well, don't bank on that, Ray," said Tony. "I happen to know that he had a lot of money upon that tennis game, and it ground him terribly to be beaten."

"Is that so?" rejoined Ray, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "I never suspected there was anything back of it when he asked me to play with him that afternoon. Now, I remember he did seem to take his defeat pretty badly. Still, it was his business. I had nothing to do with it."

"Howard is very conceited about his tennis play-

ing, so you injured him at his most sensitive point."

"Well, I'm sorry and yet, I don't believe he bears a grudge against me."

"He may have more reason now, after his humiliation this evening."

"Well, let him, then," said Ray. "He brought it on himself. If he was foolish enough to bet, he must suffer the consequences, and if he *will* make foolish speeches, as he did tonight, he must stand the result of that, too. He can't blame me. I haven't time to bother with him — which reminds me that I have to prepare for a recitation in astronomy tomorrow, and I must get about it at once or I won't be in bed before midnight."

He looked at his watch as we walked out of the room.

"Phew!" he exclaimed. "It is half past nine — I'm off — you will hear from me later — good night."

And Ray walked hastily away toward Warburton Hall, the handsome new dormitory in which his apartments were located.

As I parted company from Tony Larcom, my first intention was to go immediately to my room, but the air being balmy and inviting, I walked leisurely down the wide pathway toward the gate. Once there, I seated myself by one of the old cannons, and gave myself up to the pleasant influences of the quiet night.

I was thinking over the incidents of the meeting, its interesting results, and how they would affect our baseball prospects. Then I fell to contrasting the noise

and excitement of an hour before with the silence that now reigned over the peaceful campus. A sense of drowsiness came over me as I pursued these contemplations, a drowsiness that gradually increased until my head sank down, and at last, stretching myself out at full length, I fell asleep.

How long I lay so I do not know, but I was suddenly aroused by the sound of low voices close beside me. I lay still indifferently, thinking that it must be a couple of students enjoying the night air like myself. The low whisper and the general tinge of mystery with which they moved about, however, aroused my suspicions. Thinking some mischief was brewing, and that it would be fun to startle them, I roused up and exclaimed,

"Hello! who's there?"

The results far surpassed my expectations. There was a quick exclamation of alarm, a sharp scuffling of feet, a black shadow shot past me, and then I felt a terrible, crushing blow on the side of my head, which rolled me over and over into the pathway, where I lay stunned and bewildered.

CHAPTER IV

LEN HOWARD AGAIN

For several moments I lay still, struggling to collect my thoughts. Then, pressing my hand to my head to relieve the numb, sickening sensation produced by the blow, I sat up and stared about me in the darkness.

The next instant a dark figure not ten feet before me scrambled up from the grass and dashed out of the gate. I was too much shaken up to think of pursuit, so I sat still, listening attentively to the rapidly receding footsteps.

From the sound of these I felt confident that there were but two persons; and they were certainly badly frightened, for they lost no time in covering ground, and were in a few seconds far down the road, out of earshot.

"Now what on earth could those fellows have been up to?" I wondered, as I sat silently awaiting developments.

As nothing further occurred, I concluded that the mischief must have been summarily postponed on account of my appearance.

Whoever the mischief makers were, and whatever

their plans may have been, they could not have regetted my presence on the scene more than I did myself. My head was aching and throbbing, while the stinging sensation at the one side of my forehead, and a little stream of blood, which I could feel trickling down my cheek, showed me how severe the blow had been.

As I rose to my feet I groped about in the dark until I found my hat, which had rolled several feet away from me; and then, brushing off the dust, I stepped over to the spot where I had been sleeping, and examined the grass carefully to see if the mysterious visitors had left any traces behind them.

No results rewarded my search; so, as I was more interested in my own condition than in their plans, I decided to let the matter drop.

"We are quits," I said to myself, as I walked away toward Colver Hall. "I gave you a bad scare, and you gave me a bad scar, though, after all, I think you have the best of the bargain. One thing is certain: the next time I fall in with any fellows bent on mischief, I'll leave them to the tender mercies of proctor Murray. The rôle of night watchman doesn't suit me at all."

On reaching my room I lit the gas, and examined my face in the mirror which stood over the mantelpiece. The skin had been broken, but the cut was not deep, nor the wound so bad by any means as it might have been, considering the force of the blow. On washing away the blood, I found my forehead some-

what swollen and purple, but in other respects fairly presentable, so I felt there was cause for congratulating myself on escaping so luckily.

It seemed quite evident to me that the injury I had sustained had been purely accidental. It was more than probable that the two students, whoever they were, had been planning some escapade, and, when I suddenly rose and interrupted them, they had become startled, and had dashed off without waiting to learn who it was. Not seeing me in the dark, the last of the two had run straight over me, kicking me in the head. The appearance of the wound, the manner in which I had received the blow, and the effect it had in tripping up the runner and sprawling him out on the grass — all confirmed me in this solution of the matter.

"It will probably be explained to-morrow," I thought; "for when I am seen at morning prayers with a black and blue forehead, the fellow who kicked me will no doubt recognize the mark and let me into the secret. I suppose they were Freshmen, and up to some of their tricks."

I slept soundly all night in spite of my wound, and was awakened on the following morning by the sound of the college bell ringing for prayers.

Without losing a moment's time I sprang out of bed and scrambled into my clothes as best I could in the few minutes I had to spare.

The night's rest had refreshed me completely, and had relieved my head of all sense of pain, although the

purple bruise had deepened in color, and the swelling had scarcely diminished.

As I hurried down stairs and across the campus, the last taps of the college bell were sounding, so that I reached the chapel just as the doors were being closed. A small crowd of tardy students were pressing in, and they kept the main door open just long enough to prevent my being shut out. I was the last one in, and all alone I walked down the aisle to my seat, the object of the curious gaze of over one hundred and fifty pairs of eyes. This I was well accustomed to, for I prided myself on the exactness with which I could calculate the time needed to reach morning prayers, and I was usually one of the very last to enter.

But this morning my appearance must have been interesting, and it certainly aroused attention. A snicker ran along the lines of students as I passed the various pews, and several of those nearest the aisle plucked at my coat and gave vent to such whispered exclamations as "Oh, what an eye!" "Who built that lump on your forehead, Harry?" and so on.

As I took my seat Rod Emmons, who sat next to me, said,

"That's a bad bruise, Harry. How did you get it?"

"I don't know," I replied.

"What an answer!" he exclaimed.

I laughed.

"I mean it all the same," I said. "I got that bruise

in the dark last night, and I am looking this morning for the fellow that hit me."

Further conversation was interrupted by Professor Fuller, who came forward to the pulpit at this moment, and began prayers.

At the close, when the students were streaming out, some to breakfast and others to recitations, I received inquiries and expressions of sympathy from all sides; but though I made no secret of my mishap, no one seemed to know more of the affair than myself. As the morning progressed without my obtaining any new light on the subject, I concluded that the students whom I had interrupted the night before must have had a special reason for keeping silent.

"And besides," I thought, "perhaps after all they were not students at all, but town fellows trespassing on the campus, and frightened off by my voice, thinking I was the proctor."

In the belief that the matter would solve itself, if a solution was forthcoming, I decided to let it drop, and accordingly gave up inquiring about it.

During the recitation hour between four and five o'clock that afternoon, as I was speculating on the chances of my being called upon next to recite, some one nudged me, and a small, folded piece of paper was slipped into my hand. This, on opening, I discovered to be a note, which read as follows:

DEAR HARRY:

Meet me at the north entrance to Warburton Hall at five o'clock sharp. Don't fail, for I have something of importance

to tell you. Pass this word on to Tony Larcom. He must be there, too. Yours in haste,

RAY WENDELL.

Tony was reciting at the time, and making a fine botch of it, too, to the general amusement of the class. The meeting of the evening before had evidently interfered seriously with his preparation, for though he was making a brave fight, Professor Fuller caught him on a knotty question before which Tony's wits availed him nothing. So down he sat, as smiling and unabashed as if he had scored a brilliant success. Then I handed Ray Wendell's note to my neighbor, and saw it pass rapidly along the line. Tony read it, looked toward me, and nodded his head.

Immediately after the recitation he joined us, and together we hurried over toward Warburton Hall. Ray Wendell was standing at the north entrance, evidently awaiting us.

As we came up, Ray said,

"I'm glad you are prompt, for we've no time to lose."

At this moment Len Howard came down the stairs, tennis racket in hand, and was about to pass us when he saw Ray.

"Hullo, Wendell," he said; "when can you play tennis with me again?"

"I don't know," answered Ray. "Baseball will take all my time now, I think."

"Then why not play me before the baseball season sets in? Couldn't we have a few sets to-morrow?"

"I shall be away to-morrow," said Ray.

"Then some time next week. How about Monday noon?"

"I can't say; I may be too busy."

"See here, Wendell, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll play you for fifty dollars a side, and put up the money at once. Now, there's a chance for you."

"I don't play for money," answered Ray coldly, "and, to be perfectly frank, Howard, I don't care particularly to play at all. I understand that you had money up on that last series of games, and ——"

"Well, and what if I did?" broke in Howard. "Is it any of your business?"

"It is none of my business whether you bet or not, but it *is* some of my business whom I play tennis with, and I say again, I don't care to play."

"Oh, pshaw, you are afraid to play me," said Howard.

"If I wasn't afraid to play you before, when I thought you were the better player, why should I be afraid now, when I know I can beat you?" rejoined Ray, with a slightly sarcastic accent.

"You can't beat me — it was all luck — you couldn't beat me again to save your life!" burst out Howard excitedly. "I tell you I'll bet you anything that ——"

"And I tell you that I won't bet anything, and that baseball is all I have time for at present." Here Ray turned away.

Howard stood irresolute for a moment, as if about to say something more; then wheeling sharply on

his heel, he exclaimed with a sneer, "Oh, you're a coward!" and walked off.

Ray's face flushed a moment as he looked after him. Then he bit his lip, and, turning to Tony, said,

"I think, perhaps, you were right about him, after all. He certainly seems to be nursing a grudge against me for some reason. Perhaps I had better play him again, and let him beat me badly. It might do him good. Anything to please him, of course."

"Well, it wouldn't help him much," returned Tony, "unless you let him win back the money he lost on the last games with you."

Ray made no answer to this, but caught up his note-books, which had been resting on a box behind the door.

"Come up to my room," he said, "I've a telegram from Slade to show you," and he led the way up stairs.

CHAPTER V

UNEXPECTED NEWS

RAY'S rooms were the handsomest in college, and fully repaid in beauty and comfort the painstaking care with which he had fitted them up. Ray's father was a well to do merchant in Albany, and, knowing his son's good sense and steady habits, had never hesitated to supply him liberally with money. Ray was thus able to fully gratify his love of comfortable and tasteful surroundings, and had furnished his apartments in a most attractive manner.

The floors, which were hard wood, were oiled, and covered with rare and expensive rugs, the windows were framed by portières of rich and heavy tapestry, while the walls were hung with handsome pictures, and the many little articles of bric à brac and mementos of college life dear to every student's heart.

His rooms were a source of great pride to Ray, and a pleasurable treat to all of his college mates who were in the habit of frequenting them. They had become very familiar to me and were associated with some of the most agreeable recollections of my college life, for Ray Wendell, although a member of the class ahead of me, was one of the oldest and best friends

I had in Belmont. Our acquaintance had been formed upon the baseball field in my Freshman year, at the time when I was first chosen member of the nine, and this acquaintance had ripened into a genuine and lasting friendship, which only grew firmer as time went by, and which was strengthened on my part by a warm and enthusiastic appreciation of Ray's many superior qualities of head and heart. This feeling I shared with all who knew Ray Wendell well, and especially with Tony Larcom, who would have followed him through fire, if necessary.

As we entered his large front room and seated ourselves, Ray took up a telegram, which lay upon his desk, and handed it to Tony.

"There, what do you think of that?" he asked.

Tony read aloud:

The baseball convention will take place at the Wyman Hotel, Berkeley, at 10:30 A.M. to-morrow.

W. H. SLADE.

There was silence for a moment as Tony looked up in astonishment. Then his mouth opened.

"Gee whizz!" he exclaimed solemnly.

"No wonder you are surprised," remarked Ray. "You may imagine what I thought when I first opened it."

"Why, that is the most extraordinary and unexpected summons I ever heard of," I exclaimed. "Is that the first notification you have had?"

"I knew nothing of the date of the meeting till I

received this telegram. It was fortunate that I telegraphed Slade early this morning, for we might have missed the whole convention."

"What a stupid, blundering oversight!" cried Tony. "Just imagine a convention without any representatives from Belmont!"

"Well," responded Ray, "it would have been more serious for *us* than the convention, for the other three colleges would have constituted a quorum, and they could have voted away our rights without our knowing anything about it. I fancy the Park College men would have been glad enough of a chance like that to secure an advantage over us."

"It was a contemptible trick, I believe," burst out Tony, tossing the telegram upon the desk.

I was inclined to be more reasonable.

"I can't see the trick," I said. "Slade is known to be a very careful fellow. Had he been a Park College man, I might have suspected him of underhand work, but the Halford men have always been friends."

"I don't know what to think of it," remarked Ray thoughtfully, "but you may be sure I will sift the matter to the bottom, and if there has been any crooked work we'll make things hum at that convention. If it was merely negligence on Slade's part, it is too important to be overlooked. He would deserve an early dismissal from his office for such carelessness. Were we to miss the meeting, the damage to our interests might be very great — but come, we can talk

about that on the train. Our business now is to get ready as fast as possible. You, Harry," he continued, turning to me, "said you needed only a few hours' warning, and it turns out that is about all you'll get. Can you be ready for the 7:15 train?"

"Easily," I responded. "I have only to pack a small valise, and get my dinner."

"And how about you?" to Tony.

"I'll be at the station without fail," was the reply.

"All right, then. Don't forget to draw the necessary money for expenses."

"Why, I can't do that. You know, the bank closes at three o'clock," answered Tony.

"To be sure, I had forgotten that," said Ray. "Well, then we will have to stand our own expenses, and charge it up to the baseball association. Remember to report your absence to Mr. Dikes. I have already done so, and you had better go at once, for the college offices close at six."

I went immediately to the college offices, which were on the first floor of Burke Hall, at the left hand side of the main entrance, and just opposite the large Latin room in which our meeting had been held the night before.

Mr. Dikes was the registrar of the college, and, according to the rules, students were obliged to report to him before leaving town, in order that he might keep a record of their whereabouts. Mr. Dikes was a meek little man, but his office invested him with considerable dignity and importance. His very name

smacked of annual reports on behavior and grade, or summons before the faculty and other formal notifications that carried fear and consternation to the guilty student's heart. But, although his duties rendered him an object of profound respect and even awe, we liked Mr. Dikes none the less, for he was always kind, gentle, and considerate, and never failed to put in a good word for a student in trouble.

He was bending over a large ledger in which an account of absentees was kept, when I entered the office.

"I am going away, Mr. Dikes," I said.

"Why, vacation will soon be here," he answered, looking up with a smile.

"Oh, I mean merely for a day. I am going on the 7:15 train, and will return tomorrow evening."

"Where do you go?" asked Mr. Dikes, getting down from his high stool.

"To Berkeley."

He smiled again.

"You are going to the convention, I suppose. Mr. Wendell reported this afternoon."

"Yes, sir," I responded, "and you will get a report from Tony Larcom, too, in a short time. He goes with us."

"Very well," said Mr. Dikes, making a memorandum. "Make sure we are given fair play at the convention."

After a few more words, I hurried to my room and packed my valise. Then I went to my eating club,

which was situated some distance from the main street. Tony Larcom, who was a member of the same club, was there before me; and, as I entered, I found him wrestling with an exceptionally refractory duck.

"If you expect to get the meat off that bird you'll never catch the 7:15 train," said I, after watching his efforts for a few moments.

"I don't care for the meat; I'm doing this for exercise," he answered sarcastically. "Harry, just think what a baseballist that duck would have made, with its web feet to catch the balls, and all that muscle to throw with ——"

"Oh, stop your nonsense, and hurry up with your dinner," I answered. "We have only twenty minutes to spare."

Tony accordingly set to work in real earnest, and we soon finished our meal, and were on our way to the station.

Ray was already there when we arrived, and had purchased tickets for the party. He was conversing earnestly with Edwards, who had come down to see us off, and the latter was listening with surprise to Ray's story about the telegram.

"I wish I could go over with you," said Edwards. "I would like to see the fun. Give me all the facts when you come back, and if there has been any trickery or negligence on the part of the officers of the League, I will run off two or three columns in the next issue of the *Chronicle* that will make their hair curl up in knots."

Further conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the train, and so, bidding Edwards a hasty good by, and assuring him that a full report of the proceedings would be made to him on our return, we boarded the cars, and soon left Belmont station far behind us.

Berkeley was situated ten miles from Belmont, and on the banks of the same stream that flowed into our lake, so that travel could be effected between the two towns either by water or by rail, although the latter was a far shorter route, for the small river Mahr wound in and out amongst the picturesque hills of Berkshire, almost doubling the distance to Berkeley.

The trip by rail took scarcely more than twenty-five or thirty minutes, and this time was employed by us in anticipating the business of the next day's meeting.

As this was my first experience of the kind, I was in no position to express positive opinions, but was content to listen to the conversation of my two companions, and to obtain from them all the information I could concerning the various questions that would come up for consideration in the convention.

The time passed quickly, therefore, and almost before we were aware of it, the train slackened speed, the door of the car opened, and the conductor shouted,

"Berkeley! All out for Berkeley!"

It was about ten minutes past eight when we reached the Wyman House, which stood in the center of the town and some distance from Park College, the latter being situated nearly a quarter of a mile from the town limits of Berkeley.

As Ray registered our names, some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned and found himself face to face with Slade. The latter held out his hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Wendell? I'm glad to see you. I suppose you got my telegram all right."

"Yes, Mr. Slade," answered Ray coldly, "I got your telegram; otherwise we might have missed the convention altogether. Is it your custom to delay notifying the delegates from the various colleges until they telegraph and ask you when the meetings are to take place?"

"'Custom,' Mr. Wendell?" exclaimed Slade in amazement. "What do you mean? I have been secretary of the League for two years, and you know my custom well enough."

"I know what your custom should be in notifying us," said Ray.

"And always has been," added Slade with an accent of annoyance. "Mr. Wendell, suppose we stop this hinting. What is the meaning of your tone?"

"Why did you neglect to notify me of the date of this meeting?" asked Ray.

"I did notify you," was the instant response.

"Yes, by telegram to-day, after I had asked for the information, but why did you fail to send me the customary formal notification that should precede the meeting by a week at least?"

Slade looked Ray steadily in the face for several seconds, as if trying to determine whether he was in earnest.

"Mr. Wendell," said he firmly, "there is evidently some misunderstanding. *I sent you the regular notification ten days ago.*"

Ray's face changed.

"Mr. Slade, are you sure of that?" he asked.

"Why do you doubt it?" was the answer. "Have I ever failed before? I tell you again, notifications were sent to all the college delegates ten days ago, and you among them. I was puzzled at receiving your telegram of inquiry this morning, but supposed that you had lost the notification and forgotten the date. Do you mean to say you never received my letter?"

"Never," answered Ray. "And are you sure you did not overlook me?"

"Perfectly. See, here is the proof," and Slade opened the valise which he carried in his left hand, and, taking out his letter book, hastily turned over the pages. "I took the precaution of having those letters copied, and mailed them myself."

He pointed to the copy of a letter addressed to Ray, dated ten days before. It contained the usual notification of the meeting, and ended with

Unless we hear from you to the contrary the committee will consider this date as convenient to you.

Yours truly,
ERNEST FITCH, Park Coll.,
Prest. of the League.
W. H. SLADE, Halford Coll.,
Sec. of the League.

Ray read the letter through carefully. He then said,

"Mr. Slade, I owe you an apology. I was too hasty. I hope you will pardon me."

"Certainly," answered Slade, with a smile. "You can see that the fault is not mine, and there must have been some hitch at your end of the line."

"Yes, I did you injustice," answered Ray.

We spent the evening in the reading room and about the lobby and piazza of the hotel, greeting the various delegates that had arrived from Park, Halford, and Dean Colleges, the three institutions which, with Belmont College, had made up the Berkshire League.

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERCEPTED LETTER

PROMPTLY at 10:30 o'clock the following morning the delegates assembled in the back parlor of the hotel, which had been reserved for the convention. The folding doors which connected it with the front parlor were closed, and the meeting was called to order by Ernest Fitch, the president of the League.

The officers of the Berkshire were chosen in the following manner: at the close of each session a convention was held for the special purpose of awarding the Crimson Banner to the victorious college, and to elect officers for the succeeding year. The plan was therefore quite similar to that adopted by the several colleges in choosing the officers for their association. In the case of the League, the president was chosen from the victorious college, and the secretary from the college that held second place. Neither of these officers, however, was to be a member of the nines of the respective colleges. According to this custom, therefore, Park College had the presidency in the present season, and Halford College the secretaryship.

The meeting was not very lengthy, since only the usual matters came up for discussion, and they were

disposed of quite readily, and without much controversy. First we decided what kind of a ball we should use, and in this we favored a well known firm in New York. A few unimportant changes were made in the rules, two or three professional umpires were selected, and finally the schedule of games was arranged. According to this schedule Belmont College was listed to play championship games on the second, third, and fourth Saturdays in May, and with her opponents in the following order: first, Dean College; second, Park College; and third, Halford College.

This completed the business of the meeting, which occupied about two hours, so that when we adjourned it was approaching one o'clock, and time to prepare for lunch.

During the meal Tony Larcom looked over his time table.

"We can easily catch the 2:30 train," he said to Ray. "What do you say to going back home?"

"By all means," answered Ray. "I see no object in hanging around here any longer."

Accordingly we finished our lunch leisurely, and then repaired to the piazza, where we sat down for a few moments, awaiting the time to start for the station.

Suddenly Tony Larcom clapped Ray on the arm.

"Our valises!" he exclaimed.

Ray and he rose together and reëntered the hotel.

As I was talking at that moment with Slade, I did not accompany them, but called out,

"Bring down my valise, too, will you, Tony?"

Tony called back an assent, and I continued in conversation.

"You have quite a bruise on your head, Mr. Elder. Did you get hit with a ball?" asked Slade, examining my forehead.

"No," I answered; "I was kicked in the head by some one running over me — at least, I think so, though it was late at night, and too dark for me to be sure."

As we continued to talk about the matter, Slade said in a low tone, looking over my shoulder,

"Somebody is very much interested in you, I think."

I turned sharply around, to encounter the full, steady stare of a young fellow about my own age, who had been standing about three feet behind me.

He lowered his eyes, and at once passed into the hotel.

I looked after him curiously.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"I don't know," responded Slade. "I think he is a Park College fellow; at least, he came into town this morning with quite a crowd of students from the college. He was fairly devouring you with his eyes when I spoke."

"Well, I hope it will do him good, though I don't see why he ——" Here I was interrupted by Tony,

who came out quickly and thrust my valise into my hand.

"Come on," he said. "We must hurry."

As I turned to shake hands with Slade, I saw the fellow who had attracted our attention standing in the doorway still gazing fixedly at me, but the moment my eyes met his he turned and walked away.

"And now," began Ray, when we were seated in the train, "we must make up our nine without delay. It will be an embarrassment of riches and no easy task to choose, I think, for we have some mighty fine players on the class nines. Suppose you come to my room to-night just after dinner, and we will make a start. Of course there are some men who stand no chance, and would only be in the way, so the best plan, I think, is to select from the class nines twenty of the likely men, and invite them to compete for the 'Varsity.' We can post this list on the bulletin board Monday morning, and get down to practice without delay."

This seemed an excellent idea, and so, when we arrived at Belmont, we separated at the station with the understanding that we three were to meet at Ray's room early that evening.

Immediately after dinner I went to the post office to obtain any letters that might have arrived during the day. Nothing but a newspaper from home was in my box, so, on receiving this, I was about to walk away when I heard a familiar voice, and, turning

around, I saw Ray Wendell in conversation with the postmaster.

As I came up and took hold of his arm, the postmaster was saying,

"I really don't see how I can help you, Mr. Wendell. If your letter arrived — and I have no doubt it did — it was properly looked after. We make no mistakes. I do not, of course, remember every letter, but I have quite a firm recollection of such a letter as you describe — in a pink enevelope — and it was given to Ridley to deliver."

Ridley was the young colored boy who carried the mail for the occupants of Warburton Hall.

"Well," answered Ray, "then I'll have to question Ridley."

"That is the most likely quarter to find the mistake," said the postmaster. "Perhaps he delivered it to the wrong party, or dropped it."

Ray turned away.

"Hullo, Harry," said he to me. "You see, I am tracing up that letter. I'd give anything to know where the blame lies."

"Probably on Ridley, as the postmaster suggests," I responded. "You know he is nothing but a small boy, and liable to be careless at times."

"Well, we will see. Come on over to my room," and Ray linked his arm in mine.

When we reached the entrance to Warburton Hall, Ray went to the head of the stairs that led down into the cellar, and called into the darkness,

"Hullo, Ridley!"

After repeated calls, there was a sound in the regions below. First came the hollow clang of an iron shovel, then the crash of a coal scuttle, and the noise of scattering coal, accompanied by muttered exclamations of a character that betokened disaster. Finally, out of the cellar, and as black as the darkness he left behind him, came the unlucky Ridley, his coat off, his woolen shirt torn, and rubbing his shins where they had come to grief against the coal scuttle. He looked like a veritable imp of the night as he stood there in the glare of the single gas jet that lighted the hallway. Ray looked at him with mock severity.

"Ridley!" he exclaimed.

The boy looked at Ray beseechingly, shifted uneasily from foot to foot, and finally, unable to withstand Ray's fixed gaze, he snuffled violently.

"I ain't dun nuffin," he mumbled.

"That remains to be seen," said Ray, with a half smile, as he took the boy by the ear. "Now, Ridley, listen to me. Do you remember that very rainy Wednesday of last week?"

"Yes, sah."

"Do you remember getting the mail that morning?"

"Yes, sah."

"Do you remember any letters for me that morning?"

"No, sah."

"No letters for me?"

"Dere wan't no letters for you that mawnin, sah."

"Ridley!" exclaimed Ray, with real severity this time. "There *was* a letter for me in that mail. Now, what became of it?"

Ridley was growing more and more frightened, but no sign of guilt appeared on his ebony countenance.

"I's tellin' no lies, Mistah Wendell. I swar to golly I's tellin' no lies. Der wan't no letter for you."

"Are you sure you remember the mail?" asked Ray.

"Yes, sah, perfeckly."

"Who had letters that morning?"

"Dere was only five or six letters. I didn't look at 'em at de post offiss, but when I kem up to de door right here, Mistah — le's see, who was it?— Mistah, Mistah, oh, Mistah Howard was standin' by de doorway."

"Howard was there, was he?"

"Yes, sah, an' he sez, 'Ridley, hev ye got de mail?' an' I sez, 'Yes, sah,' an' he sez, 'Let me look at it,' an' I gived de letters ter him ——"

"You gave the letters to Howard that morning? Ridley, are you sure?" exclaimed Ray, letting go of the boy.

"Perfeckly. Mistah Howard took de letters, an' he luks 'em over, an' he sez, 'Dese two is mine,' an' he gives me back de rest."

"He kept two, did he? Well, did you see those letters?"

"No, sah, I didn't see de names. He gived me back

t'ree or four, and none of *dem* was fer you. I s'posed Mistah Howard unly kep' his own letters."

"And there were two of them?"

"Yes, sah, I knows dere was two; one was white an' de udder pink."

"What!" cried Ray. "You say one was *pink?*"

"Yes, sah. I remember dat letter well. I tuk notiss of it wen I got it at de post office, and when Mistah Howard gived me back de udder letters dat pink one was gone."

Ray was silent for several minutes, his lips pressed firmly together. At length he said quietly.

"All right, Ridley. Much obliged to you. That will do." Ridley disappeared down the cellar stairs, and Ray turned to me a long look of astonishment.

"Well, what — do — you — think — of that?" he asked slowly. I shook my head.

"And so Howard took that letter!" I exclaimed.

"So it seems," Ray answered, "and I must say it takes my breath away. Whatever may have been said of Howard, I never thought him a petty thief."

"Hold on, Ray Wendell!" cried a voice just behind us.

We both started and turned about.

Not six feet away stood Len Howard.

We were somewhat taken aback by this sudden and unexpected appearance of the very individual whose name was upon our lips. Silence reigned for several seconds.

At the first sound of Howard's voice, Ray, like my-

self, had been startled. He quickly recovered himself, however, and looked Howard quietly and firmly in the face. The latter's expression was angry and belligerent.

"Did I hear my name a few moments ago?" he asked.

"I have no doubt you did. Your name was mentioned," Ray answered.

"And do I understand that you apply the name thief to me?"

"My words were quite plain, I think," responded Ray.

"I think not. I think they need considerable explanation," said Howard, moving a little nearer.

"That depends upon how much of our conversation you have heard," answered Ray. "If you were here when I questioned Ridley a few moments ago, I hardly think any explanation is needed."

It was evident that Howard had not overheard all that had been said.

"I don't know anything about Ridley," he rejoined in a louder tone of voice; "but I know that you have called me a thief, and I intend to have satisfaction for it."

"Satisfaction!" echoed Ray, his lip curling.

"That's what I said," continued Howard, growing bolder and more threatening as he saw how quiet his opponent was. He made, however, a great mistake in taking Ray's calmness of manner as an indication of timidity.

He coolly measured Howard from head to foot with a glance of contempt.

"Why, what do you mean, Howard, by *satisfaction?*" he said. "You simply amaze me. You stoop low enough to rob my mail, and then, when you overhear me accusing you of the theft, you have the audacity to ask for *satisfaction!* What right have you to satisfaction? It is I that want satisfaction. I am the one who was wronged."

Howard winced perceptibly as the mail was mentioned, but by the time Ray had stopped speaking, he had entirely recovered himself, and seemed even angrier and more aggressive than before.

"Mail!" he burst out. "What mail have I robbed? What letters of yours have I taken? Ray Wendell, take care how you accuse me of stealing ——"

Howard's hardihood was exasperating to Ray. That he had taken the letter was beyond doubt, and now that he should stand there and boldly deny it was almost more than Ray's patience could stand.

"There is nothing to be gained by dodging in this manner, Howard," he said. "You understand me perfectly. You know that you took from Ridley last week that letter which I and the college had been expecting from Slade, relating to the date of the convention. What your reasons may have been I can only guess, but that you robbed my mail is beyond question."

"It's an infernal lie!" shouted Howard, closing his

fists threateningly, "and I'll make you eat your words, I'll make you ——"

"You'll do *what?*" exclaimed Ray, his eyes flashing.

"I'll teach you not to accuse me of stealing," he went on fiercely. "Why, what do you suppose I should want with your paltry letters?"

"Never mind discussing the reasons," cried Ray, his temper now well up. "I say you stole that letter."

"And I say you are a liar ——"

The words had barely escaped Howard's lips when Ray leaped forward and seized him by the throat.

CHAPTER VII

OPEN ENEMIES

THE onslaught was so sudden that Howard was almost taken off his feet. He was dashed back against the wall and shaken until he was nearly breathless. When he was almost strangling, Ray loosened his grip somewhat, but still held him firmly by the throat, pressing him against the wall.

"There, you cowardly sneak," he said, "don't try to bully me any longer. Now after this leave my mail alone."

With these words Ray released him. Howard, who was thoroughly frightened, sank almost to his knees, and crouched there for several seconds, breathing heavily. Then, as his breath gradually returned to him, he recovered himself, straightened up, and smoothed out his rumpled collar, while his face took on an evil expression.

"All right, Ray Wendell," he said, panting. "We understand each other. I'll be even with you fifty times over for this ——"

"I don't care what you do," retorted Ray, interrupting him.

"Haven't you already gone far enough, Howard?"

said I. "Can't you see that every word you say only makes matters worse? What do you suppose the fellows will say when they hear of this?"

Howard paused a moment. The humiliating results of such an exposure dawned upon him. He struggled to master himself, and finally said in an altered tone:

"I didn't intend to steal the letter. I didn't notice it was Wendell's till Ridley had gone away. I didn't open it. I saw it was from the baseball League, so I tossed it on the box behind the door where Wendell usually puts his books."

On hearing this I immediately looked behind the door, but found nothing. If the letter had been thrown there it had been swept away during the week.

"It is of little importance whether you opened it or not," said Ray coldly. "The result is just the same in either case. You knew the contents, and you purposely prevented my getting it."

Howard was about to say something more, but suddenly concluded to accept my advice and keep silent. His lame explanation had not helped matters at all, so, turning hastily, he walked away into the darkness of the campus, while Ray and I started up stairs.

"Well, if you ever had any doubts about your relations to Howard they should be removed now," I said. "You have made an enemy of him for once and all."

"Nothing more than he has been in the past, I imagine," answered Ray. "Only he is open about the matter now. And to think that all this started with a

few games of tennis — at least I suppose so, for Howard was friendly enough to me previous to that."

We reached Ray's door as his last words were spoken. This recalled to us the business we had in view for the evening, and Ray looked at his watch.

"Why doesn't Tony turn up?" he asked.

"I think he will be here in a few minutes," I answered. "I saw him shortly before I met you and he said he would be on hand promptly."

We had scarcely seated ourselves when Tony entered, whistling a popular tune with all the strength and fervor, and about as much expression as a fog horn. The whistle stopped short when Tony saw our faces, and judged correctly from our expressions that something unusual had happened. I described in a few words the scene that had taken place down stairs.

"Why, the rascally scamp!" exclaimed Tony when I had finished. "You ought to expose him before the whole college."

"No, no," interrupted Ray. "What could we gain by that? We could scarcely make Howard more unpopular than he is now, and, besides, granted that we could, I don't believe in that sort of revenge. I would rather let the matter rest just as it is, and I wish neither of you would say anything about it."

"But I think we ought to expose him for the protection of the rest of the college, so that all the fellows may know what a thief he is," urged Tony.

"Now that is just where you make the mistake, Tony," said Ray. "You would do Howard a great

injustice, for you would spread the impression that he was a regular thief, while my belief is that his purpose was simply to prevent my getting that letter, and his act was prompted not by dishonest inclinations so much as a feeling of enmity against me."

Tony was not satisfied on the point, however; nor was I, in fact, but as Ray urged us, we agreed to say nothing about the matter, although we felt that Wendell was acting with entirely too much generosity.

"And now," said Ray, drawing his chair up to the desk and taking up pen and paper, "let us get to work at these baseball candidates. Suppose each of you take a sheet of paper and write down the names of, say, twenty-five of the men you think to be the most likely competitors for places on the nine. Then we will compare our lists, and if we find that we have agreed upon twenty men we will post their names in the gymnasium and on the bulletin board in Burke Hall, with a formal request that they present themselves without delay if they desire to compete for the vacant positions."

"And how about the others?" I asked. "Do you suppose there will be any offense taken by any one at being excluded from the competition?"

Ray thought a moment. Then he said,

"Oh, we can word the bulletin in such a way as to avoid all chance of giving offense. We can say 'the following are particularly invited to compete for the vacant positions on the University nine,' and then we can insert a phrase something to the effect that 'others

wishing to enter as competitors will please make known their purpose to the captain.' Putting it in that way will serve as a gentle hint to others that those on the list are preferred. The college understands the matter, I think. The fellows know that we are not trying to make a close corporation of it, but only aim to make it easier for those who stand a fair show to be chosen. Last year, as everybody remembers, a great deal of money and time was wasted on a shoal of men who stood no chance of getting on the nine at all, and who knew it too, only they wanted to get the advantage of our training and practice. This plan of mine is merely a polite way of hinting to such outsiders that they must get their exercise some other way than by interfering with the practice of the men who really mean business — and I think the hint will be appreciated by the college at large."

"I hope so," commented Tony, as he thought of the low condition of the treasury, "for we have not enough money to meet the necessary expenses of the nine. I'm going to start that subscription list early Monday morning."

"Well, perhaps you will feel better, Tony, after the Glee Club Concert," answered Ray with a smile. "I think that will set us on our feet again — and now take your pencils and make up your lists."

Then he handed us each a sheet of paper.

There was a silence for several moments only broken by the scratching of pen and pencils. At length we finished, and laying our lists upon the desk,

we set to work comparing them. It soon became evident that our views coincided very closely, and the final result of our examination showed that we had all three agreed upon twenty-two names. These men were all good players who had shown their proficiency in the class games of the fall previous, and several of them were sure of places on the University nine.

"Well, let it stand then at twenty two, since we have agreed on that number," said Ray, "and now let me draw up a form for the bulletin, and then see what you think of it."

Ray wrote busily for some time.

"We must be prompt, you know," he said, as he finished, "for we must choose the nine just before the Easter vacation, so I have requested competitors to be at the ball ground Monday noon in order that we can begin practice at once."

Ray then read us what he had written. Several changes were made, and the matter rewritten several times before it was in a shape satisfactory to us all. When finally completed, Ray handed the sheet of paper to Tony.

"There," he said, "will you make two clean copies of that, Tony, and have them posted up the first thing Monday morning?"

Tony consented, and we rose to go. As I lingered at the door after Tony had taken his departure, Ray suddenly said,

"By the way, Harry, what are you going to do this Easter vacation?"

"Nothing in particular," I answered.

"Well, I have a brilliant scheme to propose then," he continued. "You know I never did like the effect the Easter vacations have on the nine. It demoralizes them and I want to lessen the evil as much as possible this year. Now here you are, Dick Palmer, and myself: pitcher, catcher, and a second baseman, who, if you take hold of my idea, can keep in splendid trim."

"Well, and what is your idea?" I asked with interest.

"Suppose both of you come down home with me for the vacation. It is a pleasant country place, and we will do nothing but exercise and practice, so that by the time we return, we will be in fine shape. I'll promise you lots of fun in the bargain, so you'd better accept. What do you say?"

"I'd like nothing better," I answered, "and I'll write home about it at once. Summer vacation is so near that I think my people can spare me this one week. Have you asked Dick Palmer?"

"No, for I just thought of the scheme this moment. I will speak to him, however, without delay, for it will be a rare chance to get in good practice, and I don't think we ought to miss it. We'll have a fine time."

"No doubt of it, and for my part, I need no urging, for I should be delighted to go. I will let you know about it in a day or so," I said, as we parted company for the night.

CHAPTER VIII

CHOOSING THE NINE

EARLY on the Monday morning following, I went over to Burke Hall to see if the bulletin had been posted on the great board fastened against the wall of the main hallway. I found not only our bulletin, but a large crowd of students assembled in front of it, and from their comments I soon became convinced that both our notice and our selection of men for the competition were satisfactory. The college was always generous and sympathetic in its support of the nine, and followed its progress with interest and encouragement. At noon a large number of the students accompanied the competitors down to the baseball field, which was situated about a quarter of a mile from the college, eager to witness the first day's practice, and to speculate on the merits of the respective men.

The club house had been opened a week or so before, and had been thoroughly renovated and cleaned, preparatory to the beginning of the season. The two assistants who kept things in order about the place, looked after the bats and other articles, and rubbed us down after exercise, had also been re-engaged.

This latter expense had cost Tony a good deal of uneasiness.

"Just think of my nerve," he confided to me. "Here I was re-engaging those two fellows, with only about forty dollars in the treasury. I hardly dared look them in the face. If the college doesn't back us up handsomely, the nine will have to go into pawn before the first month has passed."

"Nonsense; don't fret about that," I answered. "We had to have the men, and the college knows it. The money will come fast enough. Have you started that subscription list yet?"

"Indeed I have," was Tony's prompt response. "I could hardly wait till this morning to begin canvassing. I was up about half past seven, posting those bulletins, and then I set out at once for victims. There weren't many fellows up at that hour, but I saw one lone creature making his way across the campus, and I swooped down on him like a wolf, subscription list in one hand and pencil in the other. Well, who do you think it was? Nobody but Reddy Weezner. You know what an old skinflint he is. How was that for a tough nut to begin with. You ought to have seen his face when he heard my errand. He turned fairly green. You see he hadn't had his breakfast, and I suppose he felt kind o' weak to run up against a subscription fiend. I determined to hang to him, however, and get some money out of the encounter. And what do you think? I made him shell out!"

"Do you mean to say that Reddy Weezner con-

tributed something?" I exclaimed in amused astonishment.

"Yes, sir," answered Tony in high glee. "The first time on record. Reddy Weezner contributed, and what is more astonishing, he gave *three dollars*. Think of that! I suppose if he had eaten his breakfast he might have had the courage to refuse, but he didn't stand any show with me at that hour of the morning. Oh, Reddy Weezner is all right. He may be a hard nut to crack, but when he does crack he cracks wide open. But it was fun to see him totter off when I got through with him. I suppose he will kick himself for a month for his generosity."

"How does your list stand?" I asked.

"Very well, considering the short time I've been at work on it. I've collected thirty dollars, and I'm not more than a quarter through the list. You go on into the club house and get ready for practice, and I'll strike the crowd while the fellows are in the humor."

It was with a feeling of genuine affection that I unwrapped my old baseball suit which I had brought down with me from my trunk, where it had lain through the winter, and arranged my things in my locker preparatory to a new season. Of the old nine that had assembled in the club house in the previous year, only two besides myself now remained, but these were my best friends — Dick Palmer and Ray Wendell. Other than those, I saw about me only

faces of new men, some of whom I felt sure would be improvements on our last year's team.

I had little time for such reflections, however, for the others were already on the field, so I hurriedly dressed myself and went out on the diamond, where the new grass lay as smooth and evenly trimmed as velvet.

During the preliminary competition the manner in which we practised was as follows:

The competitors were divided into two companies — those who were competing for positions in the infield, and those who were competing for positions in the outfield.

The former stood in a group and received each in turn a ground ball batted by some one who stood about a hundred feet distant from them.

Beside this batter stood a competitor for first base position, with his gloves on, who caught the ball as it was sharply returned to him by the others. The practice would thus progress with the regularity of clockwork. Each man in his turn would step forward, receive the ground ball struck by the batter, return it quickly to the competitor for first base who stood beside the batter, and then give place to the next man.

The practice of the outfielders was conducted at another part of the field. The man stood out at a considerable distance from a batter who struck balls high into the air in various directions. Here, as in the infield, the competitors took turn, and returned

the ball at once with all their force to a catcher who stood beside the batter.

Meanwhile, on the diamond, Dick Palmer and I held our positions as catcher and pitcher respectively, while all the men came up in groups of four and took turns in batting. This served as practice for Dick and myself, and also enabled us to judge of the batting abilities of the various men. Ray Wendell moved about from one part of the field to the other, watching the men carefully, in order that he might arrive at a fair judgment of their respective merits. This sort of work constituted our daily practice until the nine was chosen, which choice usually took place just before the Easter vacation.

The competition this year was, from the first, sharp and close, for there were many positions to be filled, and the men were for the most part quite evenly matched. As the days passed, however, the competition narrowed down somewhat. A few dropped out, and some developed more rapidly than others, so that by Saturday it would not have been so difficult a task to pick out the likely new members of the nine.

On Saturday night the Glee Club concert took place. The large examination room on the top floor of Burke Hall had been decorated especially for the purpose and the floor filled with chairs. The concert was a brilliant musical as well as financial success. The club had been carefully trained, and sang with great spirit and dash. The audience was large and enthusiastic, consisting chiefly of the students and the

professors' families, with a generous sprinkling of town people. Every number was encored, and the singers were compelled to introduce many additional features, which they did with a good will that made the entertainment delightful throughout. It seemed to me that the old college songs never had sounded so sweet as when sung that night at our baseball benefit. The other members of the nine must have shared my feelings; and as for Tony, his beaming face fairly lighted up the lower end of the hall.

Before the entertainment was over I made my way toward him with a view to securing definite information concerning our finances. Tony seemed wrapped in an ecstatic revery as I approached. No doubt he was dreaming of the riches that lay in the strong tin box on which he was sitting, and which were soon to be deposited in the treasury of the baseball association.

"Well, Tony," I whispered, nudging him, "how are the funds now? Have you got rid of your uneasiness about hiring those men?"

"Harry," answered Tony, "I got rid of that some days ago when I finished my subscription list at $120. I am thinking now of hiring a corps of servants and a brass band to accompany us on our tour. How much do you think there is in this box?"

I shook my head. Tony leaned forward and whispered impressively,

"Over $300. And that, with the $120 I have collected and the $40 already on hand, makes it $460."

"Well, I suppose you are happy now," I said, laugh-

ing. "But what are you going to do with that $300 to-night?"

"Oh, as soon as Maynard, the treasurer of the Glee Club, comes back we are going to take it down stairs. Mr. Dikes said that we might put it in his safe over Sunday."

The proceeds from the concert far exceeded my expectations, and placed our association upon a secure financial basis. The amount now in the treasury would alone cover all expenses and carry us through the season, to say nothing of our share in the proceeds from the various games.

Easter vacation began on the following Saturday, accordingly, on Thursday night, Dick Palmer, Tony, and I met at Ray's rooms by appointment to choose the nine. There was but little difference of opinion among us, and a little more than half an hour sufficed to select the names.

Of course this choice was at first experimental, and subject to change if any man disappointed us. In order that we might have a number of substitutes to fall back upon, the other competitors were organized into a second nine with which the University team was to play practice games every day. In this way every man was put on his mettle to hold the position he had gained.

As in the case of the first bulletin, the announcement of the nine was posted up the following morning in Burke Hall. The names and positions of the men were as follows:

Catcher,	Dick Palmer.
Pitcher,	Harry Elder.
1st Baseman,	Fred Harrison.
2d "	Ray Wendell.
3d "	Harold Pratt.
Short Stop,	George Ives.
Left Fielder,	Alfred Burnett.
Center Fielder,	Lewis Page.
Right Fielder,	Frank Holland.

A short meeting of the new nine was held at five o'clock on Friday afternoon, when Ray gave them general instruction concerning practice and training, and directed them to be on hand at the grounds at noon on the Monday following vacation.

" You must remember," he said, " that the real work has only begun, so you must all buckle to and do everything in your power to help things along. One thing I want you all to observe in particular: leave individual interests alone, and play solely for the nine. Profit by last year's experience. We had good individual players, but some of them were uncongenial, and some of them were working solely for individual record, so we did not have a good nine. What we want this year is perfect harmony, and I want each one of you to help me to secure it. If you do that I have no fear for the result."

If any one was calculated to secure this harmony it was Ray Wendell, for, without being in the least dictatorial, he had perfect command over the members of the nine, and we were all in thorough accord with him.

During the week I had received word from home that I might accept Ray's invitation, and as Dick Palmer had also accepted, we had an extremely pleasant outlook for the vacation. Although Tony Larcom was not necessary to our plans, Ray Wendell could not resist asking him to join us, and accordingly it was a very jolly party of four that set out on the following day for Albany. On reaching that city we changed cars and rode some distance down the Hudson River, alighting at a small way station, where a carriage met us and transported us to Cedar Hill, the handsome summer home of Mr. Wendell.

Ray's parents received us hospitably, and did everything to make our week a pleasant one. The days passed rapidly in various delightful country pursuits. We did not forget the main object of our coming together, however, but practised hard at baseball for several hours each day. The result was that at the end of the vacation, which had flown by only too rapidly, we were playing in splendid form, and were in the best possible condition physically. The week was a perfect paradise to Tony, who enjoyed every minute of it, and during our hours of practice, he stood by, an interested spectator, and chased all the wild balls like a good fellow.

Early on the Monday morning following the Easter holidays we left Cedar Hill and returned to college. We reached Belmont shortly aften ten o'clock, and were hurrying to our rooms to unpack our valises, when we were attracted by the sound of voices on the

front campus. Rounding the corner of Colver Hall, we saw a great mass of students assembled near the front gateway, many of them talking loudly and gesticulating in an excited manner.

"Hallo, what's all this?" I asked.

"Something unusual, that's certain," said Dick Palmer. "Come, let's hurry and see what is the matter."

Hastily tossing our valises into a corner of the entry to Colver Hall, we ran down toward the crowd, and pushed our way through to the open space in the center.

"What is the trouble?" I asked the nearest man.

"Trouble! Trouble enough. It's a burning shame!" he exclaimed angrily.

"What is a burning shame?"

"Why look! Look there," and he pointed to the ground.

We looked in the direction indicated.

The old cannons — the pets of which Belmont had been so proud for forty years past — were gone.

CHAPTER IX

A COUNCIL OF WAR

ALMOST unable to believe my eyes, I gazed fixedly at the damp, bare spots of ground where our dear old cannons had rested for so long a time. Like all the students at Belmont I had grown so accustomed to the old pieces of artillery, and they had become so intimately associated with my college life, that I had learned to look upon them as a part of the institution itself, and I could not get used to the fact that they were gone — that the two Belmont cannons had actually been moved away, and that I was simply staring at vacancy. It all seemed so unreal, that for a moment I wondered whether I was awake or dreaming. As if in echo to my thoughts, I heard Dick Palmer's voice beside me.

"The old cannons gone! Why, it doesn't seem like Belmont College now."

"No," answered Tony Larcom, "it isn't the same place at all. The campus looks as if it had had two big front teeth pulled out."

"Then we must set about refilling the cavities," said some one.

We looked around.

Clinton Edwards was standing with his hand on Ray Wendell's shoulder. It was to Ray in particular that he addressed the words. Ray said nothing.

Edwards shook Ray's shoulder slightly.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked.

"It staggers me," answered Ray slowly. "Who could have taken them? Where have they gone?"

"To Park College," said Edwards.

My heart leaped at these words. Vague suspicions that had been haunting my mind for days past now suddenly became confirmed.

"How do you know the cannons are there?" questioned Ray as he started and turned around.

"Isn't it clear enough?" responded Edwards. "Remember that threatening letter, and the 'positive stand' they said they had determined to take in the matter. Who would take the cannons but the Park men? If you want further proof, do as I did an hour ago — follow the deep wheel tracks down to the dock by the boathouse, and then ask old Jerry Bunce about the steam tug which he saw coming down from Berkeley night before last."

"Oh, it is all too clear now," I burst out. "Everything is explained — the letter, and those two fellows whom I frightened away from the cannons the night of the mass meeting. They were undoubtedly a reconnoitering party from Berkeley — and then that fellow who stared me out of face on the piazza of the Wyman House — he must have been one of them, and

overheard my words to Slade about the bruise on my forehead."

There was a silence in the group for a few seconds. Attracted by our words the greater part of the crowd had by this time gathered closely about us. From a noisy, clamorous indignation meeting the crowd gradually shaped itself into a council of war, of which we formed the center.

Of this council, Clinton Edwards was one of the ruling spirits. No student in Belmont possessed more college feeling or was more vigorously patriotic than Edwards. He was an active leader in all that concerned the best interests of the students.

Another prominent member of our group was Percy Randall, fully as patriotic a student as Edwards, but more reckless. Randall was a jolly scamp, nearly always in some scrape or other, very generally liked and admired on account of his dashing, happy go lucky manner, and the chosen head of a select set of mischief makers that kept the college constantly guessing what would happen next. At a moment like this Randall was in his element, and the contemptible trick that the Park men had played upon us made the fellows only too eager to accept a leadership like his.

"Of all the mean, dastardly, cowardly pieces of work this is the worst," he exclaimed. "Just think of it, fellows; like a lot of pusillanimous sneaks they steal over here by night, in vacation time, while we are away, and drag off our cannons. Oh, I wish a few of us had been here. It would have taken only

about fifteen or twenty of us to have cleaned out half their college."

"They wouldn't have come had there been any of us here. Even proctor Murray was on his vacation," said Edwards. "It was a mean piece of work, but they planned it well, and here we are without our cannons."

"But we're not going to sit down and nurse the loss," exclaimed Randall. "There is only one thing to do in my mind."

"And in mine too," echoed Edwards quietly.

"And that is?" asked Dick Palmer.

"Go and bring them back!" cried Randall.

There was a roar of applause.

"And how shall we do it?" asked one.

"How!" answered Randall boldly. "How! There is only one way. Organize a party, go over to Berkeley, and take the cannons away from them."

"And bring the whole college down on us in a mass?" said Edwards.

"Who cares?" exclaimed Randall. "Let them come down, and we will wipe out the whole gang of them. I'd like nothing better than a chance like that. We'll teach them to meddle with Belmont College men."

"All well enough in spirit, Percy, but it *won't work.* We can't get the cannons that way," said Edwards.

"Do you mean to say you're going to sit tamely by and do nothing?" asked Randall.

"No."

"Will you go over to Berkeley?"

"Yes, but not in the way you propose," answered Edwards.

"Any way then, just so we go," said Randall.

Edwards was looking at Ray Wendell. He knew what an influence Ray's voice would exert, and he felt sure of Ray's feelings in the matter.

"Will you join us?" he asked.

"Join whom and what?"

"I propose that we organize a party of say fifty — it would be hard to handle more — go over to Berkeley this very night late, search out those cannons, take them from right under the snoring noses of those Park men, and bring them back."

"How shall we carry them?"

"Easily enough; by boat as they did. We can hire Jerry Bunce's excursion boat for the night for twenty five or thirty dollars. We will go down the river to the landing near Park College, search for the cannons right on their campus, where no doubt they are, and drag them down to the boat, loose our moorings, and off we'll go. There, what do you think of that?"

Ray's face was flushing with excitement. His anger at the outrage perpetrated upon us, his feeling of college honor, and his love of adventure, combined, left him no room for hesitation.

"I will go," he said promptly. "I only waited for some clearly defined plan. Your idea is a good one I believe we can make it a success."

"Then you'll join us?" said Edwards quickly.

"Yes, by all means."

"Good, and you too?" he continued looking at Tony, Dick Palmer, and myself. We assented at once.

"Who else?" called out Edwards.

A chorus of voices responded eagerly.

"This won't do," said Ray. "We can't go over in a mob, without discipline. That would spoil our chances. We must pick out and organize a regular party as Edwards proposed, and fifty would be enough. Who will make up the company?"

"Let Percy Randall look after that," suggested Edwards, "and we can arrange the other details. First let us see Jerry Bunce and obtain the use of his boat. We will fix the hour of departure at eleven o'clock to-night — not at our dock, for proctor Murray will be back this afternoon and he would see us. We will have the boat anchored around the bend down the river just beyond Packer's woods, and the fellows must go through the town by twos and threes so as not to arouse suspicion. There will be a rowboat at the shore to take us aboard ——"

"Hold on, Edwards," said I. "Suppose you can't get the steamer? You speak as if it was definitely arranged."

"I do so," he answered, "in order that we may not have to meet again. I don't think there will be any trouble about the steamer, but if there is any change of plan, Percy Randall can let his men know. Since we have made up our minds, we had better not

linger around here any more." Then, turning to Percy, he added: "Pick out fifty or sixty of the strongest fellows and have them on hand at eleven o'clock sharp."

"All right," answered Randall, "and now, fellows, those of you that don't happen to be chosen must not be disappointed. You can all see that this is the best plan, and that a large mob would spoil it. If you lie awake to-night you'll probably see some fun when we get back."

"Come now, fellows, let us disperse," said Ray. "There is nothing to be gained by standing around here any longer. We will only betray our plans."

At this the crowd quickly broke up, and the campus soon resumed its usual aspect — with that one marked exception — the absence of the old cannons, a change more noticeable than ever now that the throng had dispersed.

"Perhaps we had better satisfy ourselves at once about the boat," said Edwards. "Suppose we go down to see old Jerry?"

Accordingly Ray, Tony, Dick, and I accompanied Edwards down to the small shanty in which Jerry Bunce lived, situated on the shore of the lake, some distance from the boat house dock.

Jerry Bunce was at home, but at first, to our consternation, would not listen to our proposition.

"I ain't a goin' to hev no wild crowd o' students a playin' the mischief with my boat," he said emphatically.

It required considerable argument to convince him that we would do the boat no harm. He feared all manner of trouble from the expedition, and raised objection after objection. Edwards, however, had set his mind on having the boat, and he had a persuasive and convincing manner that eventually overcame old Jerry's opposition.

"Wall, I'il tell you what I'll do," he said at length. "If ye must hev the boat to-night, and you'll do it no harm, I'll let it to ye fer fifty dollars — not a cent less."

We closed with him gladly at this figure, and the bargain was soon completed. The steamer was to be ready at the place arranged that night at eleven o'clock.

CHAPTER X

A NIGHT EXPEDITION

"HIST! Look out for the fence!"

It was Tony Larcom's whispered exclamation of warning to Ray Wendell, Dick Palmer, and myself. We were hurrying along the narrow country lane that skirted Packer's woods, and Tony, who was leading, had almost come to grief against the bars which separated us from the broad meadow. The starlight was all we had to guide us, the crescent moon having set two hours before. Vaulting the fence, we turned to the left and pursued our way through the somber shadow of the woods, making a short straight cut to the bank of the river. When within about twenty yards of the water, we came out upon a stretch of clear, open ground. There we stood a moment, straining our eyes to catch a glimpse of the excursion boat Geraldine. Just then the sound of the college clock broke on the still night air. It was on the stroke of eleven.

"We are prompt," said Ray softly. "Now where is the boat? Try the signal, Tony. I think I see a shadow over there to the right."

Tony picked up a stone and threw it well out into

the river toward a large black body that loomed up in the direction indicated.

Immediately a lantern appeared, and swung to and fro. Then came the sound of oarlocks, and presently a small rowboat approached the shore. We were taken aboard, and in a few moments stood upon the deck of the Geraldine.

Clinton Edwards was already there, having boarded Jerry Bunce's craft down at the lake. We had scarcely been disposed of when there came another signal — the splash of a stone beside the boat — and the two men who had brought us turned again toward the shore. And now the signals came fast and thick, and the oarsmen were kept busy for the next ten minutes transporting the students to the steamer. As the first batch of them clambered up on deck, I was surprised to see that they all wore masks.

"Why, what is all this disguise for?" I asked of the nearest student.

His stalwart figure and strong voice easily betrayed him. It was Percy Randall.

"I ordered the fellows to have masks. There will be fun later, and we will need them. Better take one," and he held one toward me.

"No," I answered sharply, "and moreover, I think ——" but I was interrupted by the sudden departure of Randall to another part of the boat.

There was no catching him again at that moment of confusion, and among the rapidly increasing crowd of students similarly disguised. I was uneasy at the

spirit in which the enterprise was undertaken. I moved forward to the front of the boat, where I found Ray and Tony seated together, and some distance from any of the others. I joined them immediately.

"Hullo, Harry," said Ray. "I was just saying to Tony that I don't like the looks of things at all. We have begun all wrong."

"So say I," was my prompt response. "These masks don't suit me. The fellows know that the college has made strict laws against the wearing of masks. What is it for?"

"I haven't the least idea," responded Ray. "We have no need of them. I am sure we have no fear of the Park men, nor any need to conceal our features from them, while we certainly have no reason to be ashamed to show ourselves when we return home with the cannons. I can't understand such concealment. It seems underhand and sneaky."

"Oh, I suppose it is some of Percy Randall's doings," said I. "He told me that he had ordered the masks."

At this moment Clinton Edwards came up. Ray rose impatiently.

"Edwards, what on earth are these masks made for?" he exclaimed.

Clinton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know. I have just been urging Percy Randall to give them up, but he wouldn't listen to me, and the fellows all stand by him. They are all

of his spirit of mischief. He is the leader and we are simply nobodies."

"It is too bad," said Ray. "I had my doubts when you told Percy to organize. This is no Freshmen's scrape. This is to regain college rights — to vindicate college honor, and it was only on that basis that I joined it. Percy Randall is too reckless and mischief loving to run such an enterprise."

Edwards laughed.

"Well, we can't unseat him now. The fellows are all in his wake. After all, maybe I exaggerated. He promised good behavior, and I don't think he intends any wild capers. Our best plan is to join the rest and use our influence in keeping them closely to the night's work."

"Oh, we can't back out now," said Ray, leaning on the rail and looking down at the water that spurted upward in front of the prow as the boat made rapid headway toward Berkeley. "We will have to see it through, and perhaps it may turn out all right, though I don't feel at all at ease. Your plan is undoubtedly the wisest, so let us make the best of it."

Here the conversation dropped, and except for a few occasional remarks in low tones, the remainder of the trip was made in silence. After the first twenty minutes all the students moved forward to the front of the boat, where they stood in silent expectation of the sight of Park Hill, where the slumbering college lay.

It was a curious group that huddled there at the

bow of the Geraldine, mysteriously masked, and bearing an air of grim determination that boded no good for any unfortunate Park College man that happened to be abroad at that hour of the night.

Suddenly we shot out from the shadow of the trees that darkened the bank of the river at that point, and came upon a stretch of open land rising gently to a plateau on which the college rested. In some respects the situation of Park College was not unlike our own, although Belmont had more shade, stood on higher ground, and close to a lake of considerable size, while Berkeley had no water beyond the narrow river. There was a dock somewhat similar to ours, though smaller, which jutted out into the stream, and toward this we faced. The bell sounded faintly from the engine room, the wheels ceased their beating, and we glided gently through the smooth water that rippled softly away from our bow. Slower and slower we moved until we had almost reached the dock, when one of our men dropped quietly over, with a rope on his arm. Then came a gentle bump as the boat grated against the dock, a quick knotting of the hawser, a slight straining and creaking of timbers, and the first step in our expedition was taken. We had "crossed the Rubicon."

CHAPTER XI

A STARTLING DÉNOUEMENT

"Now then, Jerry," said Clinton Edwards to old Captain Bunce, "you and your men stay quietly here and watch for us. Be ready to put off quickly, for we shall have no time to spare when we return."

Falling naturally into ranks of three and four abreast, we moved cautiously up the rising land until we reached the level of the college ground, and stood in the shade of the trees at the outskirts of the rear campus. There we halted a moment, while Percy Randall gave the fellows a few whispered directions.

"What is your plan of action, Percy?" asked Edwards.

"To keep the rest here while four of us search the grounds. The moment we discover the location of the cannons we will return."

"Good," said Edwards; "and who is to go ahead to reconnoiter?"

"My idea was to have you, Ray Wendell, Harry Elder, and perhaps Tony Larcom accompany me, but you have no masks."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Ray, "what has that to do with it? We don't need to hide our faces. Go ahead; we'll follow."

"All right," answered Percy; "don't waste a minute, then, but come on."

Then, turning to the rest, he said in a louder whisper:

"Lie low, fellows, till we want you."

All dropped flat upon the ground, where the high grass hid them completely from view. Percy Randall had them well in hand, and had evidently given them minute instructions. Whatever might be said of Percy, he was certainly in thorough command of the situation, and his coolness and courage made him a valuable leader for our party at this critical period of our expedition.

Leading the rest, the five of us crept stealthily forward under the shadow of the campus trees, looking sharply to right and left for the least indication as to the whereabouts of our old artillery pieces.

"It is more than likely that we will find them on the front campus," said Edwards, under his breath. "It would be no triumph for the Park men unless they display their spoils prominently."

"Yes," answered Ray; "and it is just like their impudence to place the cannons in an exactly similar spot to that which they occupied on our campus so long."

In accordance with this idea, we stole softly along the paths and around the buildings toward the front of the grounds.

In our progress we met no one. The campus and buildings were dark and silent. Not a sound nor a

ray of light betrayed the fact that the gloomy halls about us were inhabited by slumbering inmates. Trusting in the protection of the deeper shade of the large elm trees in the front campus, we moved forward more confidently.

Suddenly Percy Randall turned and grasped Ray Wendell by the wrist.

"Well, well, what is it?" asked Ray in a startled whisper, as the rest of us joined them.

"There, there! look there, by the gate!" exclaimed Percy with a low chuckle of exultation. His exclamation was not without good cause. Percy's eyes were sharp, and they had not served him in vain on this occasion, for down by the gate, close together, stood our dear old cannons, and looking so natural in that position that we felt for a moment that we must be upon our own campus. Perhaps an ordinary passer by might not have noticed them on a night like this; but our eyes, long grown accustomed to the shape of the old carriages, quickly discerned them even in the dark shadows of the elm trees.

Forgetting everything but our discovery, we hastened forward, and in silent delight clasped the old iron cylinders in our arms.

"Now for the other fellows!" exclaimed Percy Randall. "You wait here till I come back with the rest."

Just at that moment the bell up in the tower of the main building struck one single note, that rolled and echoed over the campus with startling emphasis. It

was one o'clock. Suppressing our excitement, we stretched ourselves out beside the cannons and awaited Percy's return in absolute silence.

The minutes dragged along wearily, and the stillness was growing almost burdensome, when we heard numerous stealthy footsteps behind us; and rising up, we found ourselves surrounded by Percy Randall and his masked followers. Even to us, who knew them to be our companions, this sudden appearance of a band of disguised men, creeping towards the cannons in the dim starlight, had a strikingly weird and fantastic effect. Had Percy Randall been enacting some dire melodrama, he could not have prepared his materials or set his scene better.

"Now then, quick with the ropes!" said Percy, as the fellows gathered about. At that moment, Tony Larcom, who had been investigating the wheels, gave a groan.

"Great Scott! they are chained!" he exclaimed.

"Chained?" cried Percy.

"Yes. The right wheel of this cannon is chained to one gate, and the right wheel of the other cannon is fast to the other gate."

"That is so," said Ray Wendell. "They are chained and padlocked. That is bad, for the gates are iron, and make mighty solid anchors."

There was a silence for a moment. Our hearts began to sink.

"Can't we file the chains?" I asked.

"No," said Tony. "It would take too long, and

we can't stay here even ten minutes without running great risk of being caught."

"Let us take the gates too, then," exclaimed Percy Randall in his impetuous way.

This remark struck none of us seriously until Ray Wendell, who had been examining the hinges, replied:

"Not a bad idea at all. The gates merely rest on their hinges. Two or three of us could slip one off. Lend a hand here, and let us try."

Two fellows sprang forward and put their shoulders to the gate. Ray had judged correctly, for, to our surprise and delight, the gate rose slowly off its hinges, and in a moment was resting beside the cannon.

"Good, good!" cried Percy Randall softly. "Now take the other off, and we will bind each on the back of the cannon to which it is chained."

"Oh, this is rich!" said Tony Larcom to me with a chuckle. "I can't help admiring Percy's nerve. If the rest of the college had been fast to the gates, I believe he would have proposed taking it in tow."

We lost no time in getting our ropes attached to the cannons, and in swinging the muzzles around. Then, stretching out the ropes in the form of two long loops, we divided our party into two sections, one for each cannon. This done, we lined up and took our places. Percy Randall gave the signal for one section, and Ray Wendell for the other. The two columns swayed forward, the ropes became tight and rigid, and then off we moved slowly, pulling our old cannons after us.

Throughout our movements we had thus far been

undisturbed. Park College being situated some little distance out of Berkeley, we had no fear of alarm from town folks, and only anticipated the possibility of some one awaking in the college buildings. We had been very quiet in our actions, but, in dragging the cannons, some noise could not be avoided. It was, therefore, a period of terrible suspense, while we tugged frantically at the old pieces, fearing every moment that a note of alarm would be sounded.

We had passed all the buildings in safety with one exception — a dormitory that stood somewhat apart from the rest, and directly in the line of our path toward the river. We approached along the gravel walk with the greatest caution, moving very slowly while in front of the building, that we might avoid all chance of being detected. We were getting along toward the end of the dormitory, and were beginning to breathe freer, when we struck upon a short stretch of flag pavement that led to the entrance at that end of the building. The rattle of the wheels on those stones struck a chill to our hearts — a chill, however, which was nothing to the cold shiver we experienced a moment later, when we heard the sound of some one moving in a bedroom on the ground floor, and a short, quick cry of alarm.

"Hullo, there! who is that?"

The voice sounded just beside us. It came from a white robed figure standing in a window immediately to the right of the entrance.

He seemed for a moment unable to comprehend

the situation, and stood staring wildly out through the grating that protected the first story windows. Then, as his wits returned to him, he sprang hastily toward his door, evidently to give a general cry of alarm. Had he remained within his room and contented himself with shouting, he might have utterly destroyed our plans, but in opening his door he placed himself at our mercy. This was just such an emergency as Percy Randall loved. Quick as a flash he turned, and, crying to the nearest man, "Help me shut this fellow up!" he dashed into the entry, followed by his companion. They met the bewildered student just as he opened the door. There was a short, sharp struggle while Percy and his companion bound him tightly; then he lay perfectly still.

"There, that nips his little game in the bud," said Percy. "Now what shall we do with him? Take him along, too?"

"No," answered his companion, who proved to be Ray Wendell. "Put him in on his bed and leave him. We must hurry."

Accordingly the two lifted the student into his room, and, after making sure that the gag was arranged to give him no pain, they left him and we were off again.

We were now safe outside of the college grounds, and so, unmindful of the noise of the wheels and the clanking of the gates, we pulled furiously toward the river, where we could see the Geraldine awaiting us.

As we struck the downward grade the ropes slack-

ened in our hands, and, instead of our pulling, the cannons gathered speed and began to press us hard. It was too late to stop them, so down the grade we scrambled in confused ranks, straining every nerve to avoid our old iron pursuers, who came bumping along behind us until they struck the soft earth just before the dock, where they buried their muzzles in the ground.

Then, laughing at the situation, we gathered about them, pulled them out, and dragged them down the pier, with a great rumble and roar of the heavy wheels upon the echoing timbers.

As we looked backward with relief at the college buildings, now far behind us, we wondered if the dull thunder of our cannon wheels broke in upon the dreams of any of the sleepers there, and if they had any appreciation of the true significance of the sound.

A few minutes sufficed to roll the cannons aboard the Geraldine, and then, without more delay, we turned toward Belmont. The object of our trip had been accomplished. Our delight knew no bounds. Percy Randall was for giving three rousing cheers, but Ray Wendell repressed him.

"No," he said. "Don't disturb their rest. Let their surprise be complete when they get up to-morrow morning and find cannons and gates gone."

"That reminds me. What shall we do with those gates?" asked Percy.

"My dear boy," exclaimed Edwards with a laugh,

"it was your suggestion to bring them, and so they are yours."

"Thanks, awfully," said Percy, "but I don't want them. Let us file the chains or break the padlocks, and throw the gates overboard."

"There you go again, Percy," said Edwards. "Don't you see that that would put us in the wrong at once? We want to hold the gates subject to return so as to show that we didn't come to steal anything. Loosen them from the cannons, that is the first thing. Then for the time being we can leave them down at our boathouse. When Park College wants them back we can return them."

Percy and several others went below to work over the cannons, while the rest of us remained on the upper deck during the trip home. By the time we had reached the lake and were making toward our dock, the gates had been loosened, and the cannons considerably lightened by their freedom from these encumbrances, stood ready for their old positions.

Accordingly, after the gates had been placed by the boathouse, the fellows manned the ropes and started off briskly with the cannons. As we left the pier the rope on which I was pulling snapped close by the carriage. A halt was called to repair the break. Ray Wendell drew out his match-box — a handsome silver case which he always carried with him — and lit a match, while I crept under the carriage and refastened the rope. Then we started on again, Ray pulling on the same rope with me, and immediately

in front of me. When we had got about half way up the hill from the lake the fellow who was just behind me leaned forward and whispered:

"Will you ask Wendell for his match safe, please?"

I immediately touched Ray on the arm.

"Let me have your match safe, will you, Ray?"

He handed it to me at once, and I passed it back to the fellow behind, who, being masked like the others, was unrecognized by me.

"When you are done, give it back to Ray Wendell," I said.

After a few moments more of hard pulling we reached our campus, and with a tingling sense of pleasure at the final accomplishment of our plans, hurried the cannons along to their old resting place.

"And now, fellows," said Edwards, "we must give three cheers before we disperse. Why don't you take off your masks? Don't you know that you run unnecessary risks by wearing them?"

Percy Randall and another student were busy at the touch holes of the cannons. Percy looked up.

"Hold on, fellows; the fun hasn't more than begun," he cried.

"What do you mean?" asked Ray Wendell in wonderment.

Percy stood up and scratched a match.

"I propose a volley of cheers for our successful campaign," he cried.

I started to cheer, but I found my voice drowned out in a deafening blare of tin horns which every man

drew from his pocket. This was a totally unexpected development, for a horn spree was the last thing I anticipated at that time. Still we were in for it now, and I was disposed to enjoy the fun while it lasted. Before my ears had become accustomed to the hideous twang of the horns another shock occurred.

Percy Randall leaned forward with his match. There was a sharp sputtering for a few seconds, then two vivid, blinding sheets of flame, and the double roar of the two cannons, which at some time during the trip home on the Geraldine had been loaded by Percy's directions. It was the first time in many years that the voice of the old artillery had been heard, but it seemed as if all the force reserved during that long spell of silence was concentrated in this one blast, for the ground under us fairly shook, while we could hear windows rattling and crashing in every direction.

Immediately everybody took to his heels, and as the roar of the cannons rolled away, the sharp nasal bray of horns reëchoed from every quarter of the campus, dying away in the recesses of the various buildings whither the crowd had taken flight. It was "every man for himself" in that scramble, and for my part, the shortest route to my room in Colver Hall was what suited me best, so off I dashed.

Unfortunately I had to pass near the college offices. I thought I was in safety, and was about to pass my entry when a rough hand was laid on my collar. I was brought to a sudden and unexpected stop, the shock of which nearly jerked my head off. I strug-

gled to free myself, but in vain, so, turning about to see who my captor was, I discovered to my dismay that I was standing face to face with proctor Murray.

CHAPTER XII

A PRISONER

THE fatal power and tenacity of proctor Murray's grasp was known to every student of Belmont College, if not by personal experience, at least by reputation. From the moment I discovered that it was his hand upon my shoulder, I realized that further resistance would be worse than useless, so I stood perfectly still, and endeavored to accept the situation calmly. Still holding me firmly with one hand, he coolly scratched a match with the other, held it close to my face for an instant, and then extinguished it.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Elder?" he said. "This is the first time I ever caught you in a scrape."

"Yes, 'Dan," I answered, "and no one regrets it more than I do. If I could have had only fifteen seconds' more start, I'll venture to say you never would have caught me."

"Perhaps not," he said, with a short laugh, "but here you are all the same. You're a Junior, Mr. Elder. That's pretty late in your college life to be out on a spree."

"I own that, Dan, and the worst of it is that I never knew there was going to be any mischief until I found myself in the midst of it ——"

"Oh, I suppose not," said Murray, with slight sarcasm. "It has been my experience always to catch the innocent men. It was always the *rest* that were to blame. Now, since you had nothing to do with this little trouble I suppose you wouldn't mind telling me who were the chief parties concerned, before I let you go."

I knew that he was joking, but I could not help a slight sense of resentment at this proposition.

"Well, now, Dan," I replied, "you don't suppose that you are going to get any such information as that from me, do you? You don't suppose that I am going to betray the others ——"

"Oh, then you were one of them?" said Dan, still enjoying his little joke. "I supposed from what you said that you were only a spectator, and, somehow, got mixed up in the trouble."

"I am willing to stand my share of the responsibility," I answered.

"Well, Mr. Elder, I'm sorry you got caught. There are many worse young men in college than you, and I wish I had caught one of them instead, but as it is, I am afraid you'll have to stand the racket."

"All right, Dan," I answered.

"I won't say anything unless the faculty ask me to report, but I know they will, for there have been a good many college laws broken to-night — and a good many college windows, too, if I'm not mistaken. It's pretty serious trouble all around, and I don't

think there's any doubt but what the faculty will need you at their meeting to-morrow."

"Very well, then; I suppose I'll have to oblige them," I answered soberly, as I thought of the possible results of that meeting.

"You can go now, Mr. Elder. I hope you'll get off easy," added Murray, as he took his hand from my shoulder and walked away.

I started for my room, but before I had taken three steps an idea occurred to me.

"Hullo, Dan!" I called after Murray's receding figure. He stopped.

"Well, what is it, Mr. Elder?"

"When you are asked to report to-morrow, would you mind saying in my favor that I wore no mask?"

"Hullo! So the rest wore masks, did they?" exclaimed Murray gruffly. "That won't help matters any."

I saw the fatal mistake I had made, and I could have bitten my tongue off for speaking. I was so out of patience with myself that I turned abruptly and dashed up stairs to my room, where I threw myself on my sofa and brooded for half an hour in mortified silence.

It seemed, then, that Dan Murray had not known that the other fellows wore masks. It was probable that he did not arrive on the scene till quite late, and was unable to scrutinize any one closely except myself. Of course if I had kept silent the fact that masks were used would not have been known, but,

now that I had betrayed it, the affair immediately took on a far more serious aspect.

"It is too bad," I thought bitterly, "and yet how could I help it? It never occurred to me that Dan had not noticed the masks."

One consideration alone arose to console me in my self recrimination, and that was rather a poor sort of consolation.

"After all," I said, "since I am the only one caught to-night, none suffers by it except myself. I only made matters worse for myself by saying anything about the masks."

Concerning the nature of the results of the night's adventures I could only surmise; but now that the excitement was over and I could look at the matter soberly, I felt grave doubts arising in my mind. The spirit in which most of the fellows had acted had been one of open defiance of college laws, so I had no reason to doubt that the faculty would view the affair very seriously. Wearing masks and blowing horns had always been regarded as an indication of the most disorderly spirit, and had usually been met by the severest penalties, in the form of suspension from college for some time, and in one or two cases outright expulsion. My uneasiness rapidly increased as my mind dwelt on the possible fate awaiting me.

"It's all Percy Randall's fault," I exclaimed impatiently. "Confound him and his mischievous pranks! If we had gone quietly to our rooms after setting the cannons in place, or had contented our-

selves with three cheers, all would have been well. As it is now, I don't know what is to become of me."

I passed an anxious and almost sleepless night on the sofa where I had flung myself when I entered. As the hours dragged slowly along, the condition of my nerves scarcely improved, and by the time the first gray streaks of dawn appeared, I had worried myself into a state bordering on distraction. My bones were aching from insufficient rest, and my head was burning and feverish.

I rose about seven o'clock, and, bathing my face, redressed myself, and waited impatiently for the breakfast hour. I was anxious to get away from myself, to find something to do or some one to talk to — anything but the long, lonely silence of the past few hours. I left my room as soon as I heard the first signs of life about the building, and went over to my eating club. On the way I noticed that nearly every window on the first floor of Burke and Colver Halls had been shattered by the cannons the night before — a fact that scarcely contributed to lessen my anxiety.

To my great relief I found Tony Larcom before me at the club. Tony looked as if he had slept scarcely more than I, but he was bright and cheerful as usual. He looked at me curiously.

"See here, Harry," said he, "you don't want to carry around such a guilty face as that to-day. You'll be arrested on suspicion."

"It's too late now," I answered, "because I've al-

ready been caught. I fell into Dan Murray's clutches last night."

Instantly Tony was all concern.

"Oh, thunder, Harry, that's too bad!" he exclaimed, putting his hand on my shoulder. "Really, I'm awfully sorry about that. I heard a rumor that somebody had been caught, but I thought it was surely one of Percy Randall's select band — and it would have served them right, too; but to think that *you* got caught. Oh, that was hard luck."

I thought so myself, but to hear some one else say so did me good, and Tony's sympathy was so genuine that my spirits improved somewhat under it.

I determined to say nothing about my capture to any one else, knowing well that it would become known quickly enough when the faculty took action in the matter. Whatever action they contemplated, I received no advice concerning it during the morning or early afternoon, and the day was, therefore, a period of uneasy suspense to me. Without Tony Larcom and his unfailing good humor for companionship I do not know what I would have done. I never appreciated his friendship so much as then.

All doubt was dispelled from my mind when, at the close of the afternoon recitation, Mr. Dikes, who stood just by the door as my classmates filed out, touched me on the shoulder, and beckoned me to one side.

"The faculty wish to see you at their meeting in the main college office, Mr. Elder."

"All right, Mr. Dikes," I answered with all the calmness I could summon. "I am ready."

"If you will step into my office," he said, "I will let you know when they want you."

As I started after Mr. Dikes, I felt some one touch me. It was Tony Larcom.

"I wish you good luck, old fellow," he said, hastily pressing my arm. "Keep up your spirits, and don't let them rattle you."

I nodded my thanks, and followed Mr. Dikes into his office.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE THE FACULTY

I was not kept waiting long. Scarcely five minutes had passed when the door again opened, and Mr. Dikes reappeared.

"Come in, Mr. Elder," he said quietly.

With considerable trepidation I followed him, and in a few seconds more I stood in the presence of the faculty.

There was an ominous hush as I took my stand in the middle of the room, facing the seven professors who sat opposite me in a row. I looked apprehensively from one to another with a view to ascertaining what was to be the nature of my reception. My glance was not encouraging. Severity was the predominant expression on every countenance. In the center, behind a small table, sat Dr. Drayton, the college president. He was a man habitually sober and impressive in manner, and, at this moment, his face was exceptionally grave. Gazing at me sharply over his glasses, he began:

"Mr. Elder, there was a riot among the students last night, which resulted, as you know, in the destruction of college property. It was conducted in a

spirit of open revolt against our laws. Horns were blown, and the old cannons on the front campus were loaded and discharged, breaking a number of windows. Such culpable infringement of our rules has not been known in some time past, and we are determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and punish the offenders to the fullest extent of our laws. Proctor Murray reports that you were one of these offenders. Have you anything to say?"

My voice trembled somewhat as I answered:

"I was among the students on the campus last night."

"Proctor Murray reports that masks were worn. Is this true?"

"Yes, sir."

"He also said you were an exception to this — that while the rest wore masks, you had none."

"I had no mask, sir. Knowing it to be against college laws, I refused to wear a mask."

"We are glad to know this in your favor, Mr. Elder. The charge against you, however, is serious enough. You were one of this disorderly crowd, and you were associated with all its doings last night."

"I was with them, sir," I answered.

There was a pause for a moment, while Dr. Drayton said something in a low tone to Mr. Dikes. The latter left the room for a few seconds. On returning, he made an affirmative sign to Dr. Drayton, and stood by the door as if awaiting directions.

"Show him in," said Dr. Drayton.

I turned in surprise as the door again opened. Could it be that some one else had been caught? I could not avoid a slight sense of relief at the thought, for I was becoming terribly depressed in my endeavor to support alone the whole weight of professional dignity arrayed against me. The thought of companionship was extremely welcome to me.

I was not kept long in doubt. I heard Mr. Dikes' voice say, "This way, please." A quick, firm step sounded in the outer office, the door was thrown wide open, and *Ray Wendell* stood on the threshold. There was a mutual expression of surprised recognition between us, as he moved forward and stood beside me. Dr. Drayton's tone was even more severe in addressing Ray than it had been to me.

"Mr. Wendell," he said, "you are here to answer a charge of a very grave character. You are charged with taking an active part in the disorderly disturbances last night."

Ray was perfectly calm.

"And may I ask, sir, on what ground that charge is brought against me?"

Dr. Drayton held up a small silver object which had been resting on his table, and which had escaped my notice.

"This is your match box, I believe," said the president. "Your name is upon it."

Ray started as he recognized the box, but recovered himself almost immediately.

"Yes, sir. It is my match box," he answered quietly.

"It is, no doubt, from this box that the matches were taken to light the cannons last night,'" continued Dr. Drayton, looking Ray steadily in the face.

Ray said nothing.

"Answer me, Mr. Wendell," said Dr. Drayton after a pause. "Were you one of that party of students who created the disorder last night?"

"I was with them, sir," said Ray, making the same answer as I had.

"And you were masked like the others?"

"No, sir."

Dr. Drayton looked at him quickly.

"Mr. Wendell," he said, in a still sharper tone of voice, "we are speaking upon information furnished us by Mr. Elder."

Ray turned with a quick movement and looked at me. I shall never forget that look — a look of mingled surprise, disappointment, and reproach. It cut me like a knife, for I saw only too clearly what it meant. Coupling the display of the match box, which he remembered giving me the night before, with Dr. Drayton's last words, Ray had concluded, as was only natural in the face of such evidence, that I had betrayed him. The thought that he should suspect me of such baseness, for one instant, was more than I could stand, so I hastened to correct the impression at once.

"Dr. Drayton," I said quickly, "my words misled

you. When I said that I wore no mask I did not intend to imply that *all* the rest wore masks."

"That was certainly the impression you gave me, sir," answered Dr. Drayton, "and I think the other gentlemen of the faculty placed a similar construction upon your language."

"I am very sorry, sir," I stammered. "There were several others besides myself who wore no masks, and Mr. Wendell was one of them."

I glanced quickly at Ray as I said this, in order to mark the effect of my words. He would not look at me, and it was only too evident from his manner that his doubts had not been cleared by my attempted explanation. Dr. Drayton's positive tone, and my hesitancy and embarrassment, Ray had undoubtedly interpreted to my disadvantage. It must have seemed to him that Dr. Drayton was right, and that I had weakly shifted my position. I was distressed to see that I had not improved matters appreciably.

"I must wait till we are alone; then I can explain it," I thought. Meanwhile I was in a far from enviable position — in disgrace with the faculty, and at the same time suspected of falseness by my best friend.

The inquiries were again directed toward Ray.

"Then you *did not* wear a mask?" said Dr. Drayton.

"No, sir."

"Was the match box in your possession when the cannons were discharged?"

"No, sir," answered Ray. "I lent it to some one a short time before."

Dr. Drayton leaned forward and continued with greater earnestness.

"Mr. Wendell, this match box was found this morning just beside one of the cannons. It was open, and the matches were scattered about, as if it had been dropped in haste immediately after the guns were discharged. We are confident that the man who lighted the cannons, held this match box in his hand."

Ray was silent.

"Mr. Wendell, when was it that you lent the box?" asked Professor Fuller, speaking for the first time.

"About fifteen minutes before, while we were coming up the hill from the lake," answered Ray.

"To whom did you lend it?" asked Dr. Drayton quickly.

It was not a fair question, and Ray made no immediate reply. He saw that a full and accurate answer would turn upon me the suspicion of having lighted the cannons. It was an excellent opportunity, had he been disposed to accept it, for him to retaliate upon me for my supposed falseness to him. But this, I knew, was the kind of retaliation which Ray Wendell despised. However much he may have doubted me at that moment, it could in no way affect his own sense of honor.

In answering, he measured his words carefully.

"It was dark, sir — too dark to recognize anybody, except close by. Some one behind me asked for my

match box — I did not see him, but handed it back without turning around."

"But you recognized his voice, did you not?" questioned Dr. Drayton, pushing the inquiry eagerly.

Ray hesitated.

"Dr. Drayton," he said at length, "granted that I knew who it was, could I be expected to tell — to ——"

I could stand it no longer, so I broke in again.

"It was to *me,* sir, that Mr. Wendell gave his match box."

All, Ray included, looked at me in surprise.

"To you!" exclaimed Dr. Drayton.

"Yes, sir," I answered, "to me, but only to pass it back. Some one of those behind me asked for the box, and I got it from Mr. Wendell. I only retained it for a moment, and I do not know to whom I gave it, for the rest were masked."

Ray was looking at me with an expression of relief on his face. He was beginning to see that he had misunderstood the position of affairs.

Dr. Drayton was plainly disappointed. He had at first thought that his inquiries had unearthed the chief offender, but now he found himself as far astray as at the beginning.

Scanning us both sharply he asked:

"Had either of you gentlemen any idea of the purpose for which that match box was wanted?"

"No, sir," we answered together.

"But you knew the cannons were to be discharged?"

"No, sir," answered Ray, "not even that. It was a total surprise to us. We had no idea that masks were to be worn either."

The professor looked at us incredulously.

"Then how came you to be identified with this party, Mr. Wendell?" asked Professor Fuller. "How is it that you, a prominent member of the Senior class, became associated with this masked company?"

"The object of our gathering last night," said Ray, "was to regain the cannons which had been stolen by the Park College men. It was on that basis alone that I joined the party. I had no idea that there were any mischievous intentions until too late to withdraw."

"Please recount to us what occurred, Mr. Wendell," said Dr. Drayton.

Ray accordingly narrated the doings of the night before, while the professors listened with eager interest. When he had finished, Dr. Drayton said:

"I believe we have now all the facts before us, as far as they can be ascertained; and, while they do not by any means exculpate you, they throw a somewhat more favorable light upon your motives. You had no right, however, to take the law in your own hands, as you did in this undertaking, and you cannot free yourself from a share of the responsibility for what occurred."

"But the cannons, sir," urged Ray. "They were ours, and they had been stolen from us."

"The cannons belong to the college," said Dr. Drayton severely, "and the college authorities were the proper persons to take steps in the matter. We had already begun action for their recovery when this disorderly demonstration took place."

Ray had nothing more to say.

"Young gentlemen, you may go now," continued the president. "You will please present yourselves at my house this evening, when I will acquaint you with the action of the faculty in this matter."

We bowed, and were shown out of the room by Mr. Dikes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PENALTY

No sooner were we outside than Ray turned to me and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Forgive me, Harry, for doubting you a single moment," he said.

"Certainly," I answered; "I don't wonder at your doubts, for appearances were dead against me."

"What was I to think?" he continued. "The only evidence for summoning me was the match box which I had given you. Then when Dr. Drayton spoke about information obtained from you, what could I ——"

"Oh, don't mention it again," I broke in. "It disturbed me enough at the time to think that you suspected me of such meanness. It is all right now, so let it go."

"I owe you a thousand apologies," he said.

"Well, I'll give you a receipted bill of them, and call it square," I answered, laughing. "The question that agitates me most just at this moment, is what are the 'potent, grave, and reverend signiors' inside there going to do with us."

"I give it up," answered Ray. "It is unfortunate

all around. Here we are, the least offending in the lot, hauled up to be made examples of, while scapegraces like Percy Randall go at large, as if they were spotless innocents. I could wring his neck for getting us into this fix."

"The faculty seem to be disposed to favor us somewhat," I said, as I recalled Dr. Drayton's words.

Ray shook his head.

"We can't get much encouragement, I fear, from that. It only means that we won't be expelled for good, as we would have been, undoubtedly, if we had been ringleaders."

It was with anxious hearts that we awaited the hour to go to Dr. Drayton's house. I did not go to dinner. I had no appetite, and I did not care to face a club of noisy companions in my present mood. About a quarter of eight o'clock Ray came to my room, where I was pacing the floor impatiently, and we went over to the president's residence.

We were ushered into his study, where presently Dr. Drayton joined us. Inviting us to be seated, in his usual grave manner, he took his place at his desk, which was situated in the middle of the room, and began forthwith:

"Young gentlemen, I may as well say at once that I sincerely regret your connection with this unfortunate affair. You are both young men of high standing and good reputation in your separate classes, and I am very sorry that anything should injure your record. It seems quite evident to us that you were

not ringleaders in the disorderly and mischievous behavior of last night, and that you carried yourselves as well as could be expected under the circumstances. But you were concerned in these disgraceful doings; you deliberately joined a party bent on taking the law into its own hands and setting our authority at naught, and you must therefore stand the consequences."

Here Dr. Drayton paused a moment, while we watched him in breathless suspense.

"As I told you this afternoon," he continued, "we had already taken steps for the recovery of the cannons, and we were the proper ones to conduct the affair. We were intensely annoyed at hearing of your hasty behavior, for you have placed Belmont College partially in the wrong by acting so forcibly. It was hasty, injudicious, and disorderly, and even if you had not aggravated it by a wanton spirit of mischievousness, it would have been our duty to make an example of you for taking authority into your own hands. The faculty have given your case a full and just consideration, and have come to the decision that it will be necessary for us to suspend both of you from college for a period of five weeks."

Dr. Drayton paused again. His words had fallen upon our attentive ears like a thunder clap. We dared not look at each other. Each was busy with his own thoughts.

Five weeks' suspension! Why, what would become of us? There were only nine weeks in the last term of the year, and the ninth week was occupied in the

final examinations. For Ray Wendell the affair was likely to prove far more serious than for me. He was in the Senior class, and therefore had his final examinations two weeks earlier than I would. I glanced at him quickly. His face was quiet but pale, and I knew how he must be suffering, to see the fondest hopes of his college life being swept away.

Dr. Drayton, who had been watching us closely, began again:

"Young men, I can appreciate your thoughts at this moment, and you are right in your estimate of the serious results of this penalty upon your studies. In your case particularly, Mr. Wendell,, this suspension would be almost fatal to your success in final examinations. I speak, therefore, in behalf of the faculty in offering you some remittance of this sentence."

We both looked up eagerly.

"Upon a certain condition," he added. "We saw clearly that this punishment would interfere seriously with the college work of both of you, and we were glad, therefore, to consider the favorable circumstances in your case, and to make every allowance possible on account of your evident disposition to conduct yourselves in an orderly manner last evening. Upon a certain condition, therefore, we offer to remit a large part of your punishment."

We still gazed at him, anxiously expectant.

"You are both baseball players, and are devoting a great deal of time to the game," he said, looking from one to the other.

We acquiesced silently.

"And you, I believe, Mr. Wendell, have accepted the position of captain of the nine for this year."

"Yes, sir," answered Ray.

"Do you remember our conversation last spring, Mr. Wendell? I warned you that baseball was taking too much of your time. I found that you were neglecting certain branches of study on account of the game, and that it was interfering with your progress. Did you forget that warning?"

"No, Dr. Drayton. I accepted your suggestions, and, at first determined to give up baseball this year; but my college mates begged me not to go back on them, and upon thinking it over I made up my mind that I could, by being careful, keep up baseball, and lose nothing by it in my studies."

"It is a mistaken idea altogether, sir," exclaimed Dr. Drayton with some show of impatience. "You made an experiment of it last year, and what was the result? You dropped five places in your class during the baseball season. You, Mr. Elder, dropped ten. I say it is useless to attempt it, and I am sorry to see so promising young men throwing away opportunities and wasting time on a mere game."

"But, Dr. Drayton," said Ray, "I can't help thinking that baseball does us as much good in one way as our studies do in another."

"All exercise is good — in moderation," answered Dr. Brayton sharply, "but when a game interferes with your class work, then it is time to stop. The

matter was well gone over in our interview last year, and I am sorry, Mr. Wendell, that my warning was so little heeded. It comes now, however, to a choice. The faculty is willing to make your penalty in this case merely a nominal suspension of two weeks, upon condition that you young men consent to give up baseball."

There was a dead silence for several moments. At length Dr. Drayton said,

"Well, young gentlemen, what is your choice?"

Ray rose.

"Why should we be put to the necessity of a choice, Dr. Drayton? If I am careful, I see no reason why baseball should conflict with my class work."

"We are no longer to discuss the matter, Mr. Wendell. You know my views well enough, and it would be useless to repeat them. The question is merely which of these will you choose. I am sure good sense will relieve both of you of any hesitation in the matter."

"But I have promised my fellow students to play ball. The nine has already begun work. It would break up all our plans," exclaimed Ray.

"I cannot see the importance of your baseball plans," said the president coldly.

"I feel in honor bound to my college mates. I cannot desert them," answered Ray desperately.

"Dr. Drayton," said I, "the season has so far advanced that it would not be fair to the rest for us to back out now."

"Then what am I to understand is your answer?" asked Dr. Drayton, looking fixedly at us.

Ray turned to me. It was evident that we were of the same mind. Ray's thoughts no doubt dwelt longingly a moment on the commencement honors he had hoped to win, but his face showed no struggle, no hesitation. Dr. Drayton's effort to force him into renouncing baseball had aroused all his latent pride and sense of honor. He felt, as I did, that the condition was unfair, and based upon a wrong assumption — namely, that baseball and studies could not be conducted together without a loss to the latter. Turning to the president, Ray spoke for both of us.

"If this is the condition, Dr. Drayton, then we must choose the five weeks' suspension," he said quietly.

Dr. Drayton wheeled sharply around in his chair and took up some papers that lay on his desk. From the way his hands trembled I could see that he was very angry.

I started to speak.

"You have said quite enough, young gentlemen," he said in a constrained voice. "If this is your decision, I must own that I am deeply disappointed at your choice, which does you very little credit. Please make arrangements to leave college to-morrow. Mr. Dikes will notify your parents of your suspension."

"Dr. Drayton, is there *no* alternative?" asked Ray almost imploringly, his voice nearly breaking under the pressure of his pent up feelings.

"There *was* an alternative, sir, but you have rejected it. Nothing now remains but the penalty which the faculty have imposed. You would have shown more wisdom had you accepted that alternative."

"Oh, no, sir; we cannot accept," exclaimed Ray in despair.

"Then good day, sir," said Dr. Drayton, without relaxing a muscle.

Recognizing the hopelessness of further words, we turned and went out. As we walked down the long gravel walk, Ray said slowly, as if talking to himself,

"It was a terribly high price to pay for a season of baseball. I hope the boys will appreciate that if we don't win the Crimson Banner."

"I can't realize it yet," I rejoined. "It seems too terrible. Just think of it! Five weeks from the college! We will have to live somewhere in town, and go to the baseball grounds by a roundabout way, for if we are caught on the campus during our suspension we will be expelled ——"

"Little difference it would make to me," said Ray bitterly. "I might just as well have been expelled for all the chance it leaves me."

"There, old fellow, don't take it hard," I exclaimed, detecting in his voice the symptoms of breaking down. "I know it puts you in a terrible fix, but, somehow, it seems as if something *must* happen. I can't make up my mind that it is true. There must be some way out of the hole."

Ray shook his head sadly.

"I see none. We have refused the only chance offered us."

"No, no," I exclaimed eagerly, after a moment's thought; "there is a chance left."

"Where?" exclaimed Ray, looking at me eagerly.

"Professor Fuller," I answered.

Ray was silent for a few seconds. Then his face brightened a little.

"Good!" he said. "You are right. There is a chance in him. We will go to see Professor Fuller to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV

A VISIT TO PROFESSOR FULLER

WHATEVER may have been Ray Wendell's feelings that night, my own were varied and conflicting. Not that I repented of our decision. By no means. If the question had again been presented to us in the manner in which it had been proposed by Dr. Drayton the evening previous, I should have made the same answer. But, at the same time, the importance of our college duties, and their claim upon our attention, made me regret more deeply the necessity that had compelled such a choice as ours.

Frequently during the night would arise the question: "Should I have sacrificed my college interests for baseball?" and almost immediately would come the feeling that we had been treated unjustly in being forced to such a choice, and that we were right in rejecting it. The more I considered the matter, however, the more in doubt I became. From this doubt Professor Fuller offered the only chance of relief, and I maintained unwavering trust in him.

"I won't get discouraged about the matter until I hear what the 'old governor' has to say," I repeated to myself.

Professor Fuller was the oldest and by far the most popular member of the faculty. He was always the student's first friend on his entrance into Belmont; and many a homesick boy had cause to remember most gratefully the kind attention of the professor at a time when the surroundings were strange to him and he was sadly in need of friendly advice. The old gentleman had always made it a principle to interest himself in all newcomers, to welcome them, and make them feel at home. By innumerable little acts of kindness he would manifest his fatherly interest in the boys, who loved him one and all with a warmth of feeling second only to that which they possessed for their parents.

There was no student who had not at some time felt the kindly influence of Professor Fuller, but it was the boy in trouble who always had special cause to be grateful. To him the students turned instinctively when in need of guidance or advice, and no one ever came away disappointed. It was this that had won for him the title of "the old governor," which was no disrespectful name, but a genuine term of endearment, and was used by the fellows with feelings of the utmost affection.

It was no idle thought, therefore, that suggested Professor Fuller's name to me, nor a vain hope that led us to seek his counsel in our trouble.

Immediately after breakfast the following morning I sought out Ray Wendell that we might lose no time in making our call on the professor. We met

at the post office, and one glance at his face showed me that Ray's mind was scarcely more at ease than my own. Few words were exchanged as we walked along the shady lane at the left of the college grounds, leading to Professor Fuller's house. This was situated quite a distance back from the gate, in the midst of a large lawn, which was cut off from the street by a high hedge of evergreens.

As we approached we heard just on the other side of this hedge a female voice calling to Sport, the professor's large collie dog, who was burrowing under the bushes. On entering the gate, we saw Miss Nettie Fuller leaning forward over a bank of flowers. She was a bright and attractive girl of sixteen and was held in the highest regard by the students who were fortunate enough to know her. Both of us being acquaintances of long standing, we stopped to speak to her. She did not notice us at first, for her face was hidden by a large sunbonnet, and her attention was engaged in her work, and in keeping the dog out of mischief.

"Sport, Sport, come here and leave that poor squirrel alone!" she called, turning her head toward the hedge.

At this moment the squirrel broke cover, and rushed across the path directly in front of us, Sport after it in hot pursuit. Immediately we dashed for him. Sport saw us coming, shied to one side, and brought us all down in a heap on the gravel path, Ray, however, retaining a firm hold on the dog's collar. There

was a sharp scuffle, a yelp from Sport, and the three of us rolled over and over in a confused mass.

Miss Nettie screamed faintly as she turned round; then, taking in the situation, she burst into a peal of laughter, while we disentangled ourselves, and got up.

"We were trying to make ourselves useful, Miss Nettie," said Ray, as he picked up his hat and dusted off his clothes. "I hope we were, for we have ruined our chances of being ornamental."

Thinking that she had perhaps laughed too hard at us, Miss Nettie blushed and sobered down.

"I hope you are not hurt," she said. "Please excuse my laughing so. I fear you think I am very rude to receive visitors in such a manner."

"Not when visitors call so informally," returned Ray, with a smile.

There was a silence. Miss Nettie had taken off her sunbonnet, and was swinging it by the strings. She evidently wished to say something, but was in some doubt how to begin. Surmising what the subject might be, I asked:

"Is Professor Fuller in, Miss Nettie?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, looking up quickly. Then, continuing her gaze, she said slowly, "I think I know what you want to see him for."

"No doubt of it," answered Ray gravely. "The whole town will know it by to-night."

"I can't tell you how awfully sorry I am," went on Miss Nettie, with an accent of genuine sympathy. "I heard all about it at breakfast this morning, and

I think you are having a great deal more trouble than you deserve."

We looked at her gratefully.

"It wasn't your fault if the other boys didn't behave," she continued earnestly. "You did all you could to keep them quiet, and it was very mean of them to get you into such trouble."

"The boys didn't intend to, Miss Nettie," I said, laughing. Notwithstanding her injustice to the other boys, I was pleased to have her take our part so warmly.

"I don't care," she said emphatically. "They should have done as you said."

"I am sure I wish they had," said Ray fervently.

"As for bringing back the cannons, I think you ought to have the vote of thanks of the whole town instead of being suspended as if you had done something wrong. To think of your going away over to Berkeley and taking the cannons right off their campus! Oh, it was splendid! I got awfully excited while father was telling me about it. If I had been a boy I would have gone along too — and I told father so."

"Thank you very much, Miss Nettie," said Ray. "I only hope your father is as generous in his opinion of us as you are."

Miss Nettie looked at us with an expression of significance.

"To tell the truth," she said lowering her voice, "I think father enjoyed the story as much as I did,

and I believe he admires you for what you did. But don't let him know that I told you."

We were considerably relieved to hear this.

"You will find father in the library, I think," she added. "Come in and I will see."

The professor was seated at his table when we entered the library, but he rose at once and greeted us with his cordial smile, and a warm clasp of the hand.

"Good morning, boys," he said. "I half expected to see you this morning. Be seated."

Miss Nettie here left us with her father, who resumed his chair, while we sat down opposite him. Then there was an awkward pause.

"Well, out with it," said Professor Fuller at length. "I can easily guess your errand."

"We have come to see you about our suspension," said Ray. "We want your advice."

"Why, what advice can I give you?" he asked. "You have made your own decision. Doesn't that dispose of the matter?"

"We fear it does," said Ray, "but we have come to see if there is any hope for us under the circumstances. Is there no possible chance of our obtaining some remittance of this penalty?"

"A chance was offered you, was it not?"

"Yes, sir, but the conditions imposed forced us to decline that chance," answered Ray.

Professor Fuller's face was grave but kindly.

"And do you think," he asked, "that baseball is more important than your success in college?"

"No, sir, by no means," answered Ray earnestly. "Nor did we intend to give Dr. Drayton that impression. While meaning no disrespect either to Dr. Drayton or the faculty, we cannot help feeling that we were placed in an unfair position. Our penalty was five weeks' suspension for taking part in the disturbances of night before last. Now, if we deserved five weeks why was it not assigned as our penalty without further question? If we deserved two weeks, why was not that assigned? But this baseball matter was dragged in to influence the question. What has our playing baseball to do with the question as to whether our penalty for a misdemeanor shall be five or two weeks? Playing baseball is not a misdemeanor. We felt that our penalty should be assigned simply on our behavior in this case, without being conditioned upon outside matters that have nothing to do with it. We feel that Dr. Drayton has taken advantage of our helpless position to force us into giving up baseball. Our parents do not object to our playing, and we do not see why we should be compelled to make such a choice as was offered us. This is what we think is not fair."

Ray had grown bolder as he continued, so that, by the time he finished, I feared Professor Fuller would be angry. The latter, however, was quite calm, and listened quietly with folded hands.

When Ray ceased speaking he said:

"Of course, boys, you know that, however much I may sympathize with you, I must speak as a mem-

ber of the faculty. But I appreciate the whole weight of what you say, and am sure that you believe that you are doing what is right under the circumstances. I can easily understand your making such a choice, considering the manner in which the matter was presented to you, and I do not wonder at your feelings at the present moment. I will be frank enough to say that the proposition was Dr. Drayton's and that he carried the matter through. The penalty that would have been assigned under ordinary circumstances was five weeks' suspension. We took into consideration, however, the many mitigating circumstances in your case, and we were inclined to lessen the sentence greatly. It was then that Dr. Drayton bethought him of this condition. I will not say anything about the matter further than that it was Dr. Drayton's action entirely. As he was earnestly bent upon your accepting this condition, I can easily understand why your choice should have annoyed him."

"And is it hopeless?" I asked anxiously.

"That is a question I do not like to answer directly," said Professor Fuller, smiling. "What would become of the college if the boys should look to me to reverse the decisions of the faculty? I have no such power, you know, nor should I want it. I would be in hot water all the time. I will say this much, however: that I sympathize with you heartily, and that I will see if anything can be done."

"That is the most we expected," put in Ray, his face brightening.

"Don't expect too much," said the professor. "All that I can do is to see Dr. Drayton and talk the matter over with him. The whole question rests with him, and his authority alone will decide it. The rest of the faculty would be willing enough to relinquish the condition. What my interview with Dr. Drayton will result in remains to be seen. He is a man of strong convictions, as you know, and apt to be especially set in his way when seriously annoyed."

"I am afraid he is very angry," said I.

"No doubt of it; still there isn't a better man at heart to be found than Dr. Drayton, and you can expect justice. I speak from long experience, for I knew him as a classmate years ago, and I have lived close to him the greater part of my life. I will bring the matter up in a few days, when I think the annoyance will have passed away. Meantime what are you going to do?"

"We will move out into town temporarily," I answered. "Of course we cannot attend recitations, nor go upon the college grounds, but we must stay here at Belmont for the sake of the ball nine if for nothing else."

"It will be best for you to stay for several reasons," said the professor. "Have you written to your parents about the matter?"

"No, sir."

"Better do so at once, and so anticipate the formal notification which Mr. Dikes will have to send them. Tell your story in full, and then, when the notification comes, your parents will understand it. Now as to

your studies. I suppose you intend to keep abreast of your classes?"

"We would like to," answered Ray, "but we feared that we would be unable to do so without the privilege of attending lectures."

"Not at all," said the professor. "Let some one of your classmates bring you his written notes to copy each day. You can get Mr. Dikes to tutor you. He does that sort of work frequently. I strongly advise this for your own good, and because I know that the fact that you are conscientiously working to keep up with your classes will influence Dr. Drayton in your favor."

This suggestion we caught at gladly. Under Professor Fuller's encouraging words, the affair was rapidly taking on a more cheerful aspect. We continued to talk the matter over for some time longer, and when at length we rose to go, it was with hearts considerably lightened.

"I don't know how we can thank you for your kindness," said Ray earnestly, as we stood by the door.

"Why, I have done nothing as yet but talk," answered the professor, smiling. "Wait a few days, and we'll see what can be done. However it may turn out, don't be discouraged. Make the best of it, work hard and you need not be despondent."

Once more shaking us warmly by the hand, he bade us good morning, and returned to his library, while we hastened over to the college to make preparations for our change of quarters.

CHAPTER XVI

SERVING OUR TERM

THE next morning found us settled in our temporary lodgings at the house in which my eating club was located. We had secured a double room on the second floor, and had transferred our necessary effects there at the earliest moment.

This had been an especially severe trial for Ray, who was compelled to relinquish the comforts and luxury of the beautiful apartments which he loved so well. It was useless, however, to brood over lost privileges, for we found our condition much better than we had expected.

We wrote home, as Professor Fuller had suggested, and received in reply letters that showed us that our parents were in sympathy with us, and were not inclined to judge us severely. Ray's father informed him that he had also written to Dr. Drayton concerning the matter.

When the news became generally known it created a great flood of feeling among the students, and we were the objects of sympathetic attention on every hand. No fear that the fellows would fail to appreciate our sacrifice. We were fairly lionized. Not

only did the students come in one after another, personally, to condole with us, and to offer their services should we need anything, but we received a formal vote of thanks from the baseball association for what they were pleased to term our "patriotic spirit."

We received so much attention, in fact, that for the first two or three days we feared that we would never have a moment to ourselves to keep up our studies. We found no difficulty in making arrangements for securing the notes of the college lectures. Tony Larcom, who wrote a very fair shorthand, promised to copy out his notes and lend them to me, while Ray made a similar arrangement with a member of his class. Mr. Dikes showed himself more than willing to help us, so we set apart certain evenings of the week when he would come to our room and tutor us in the various subjects which our classes were pursuing.

In order that we might secure the necessary leisure we were compelled to make a rule of being at home to nobody during certain hours; for we would otherwise have been fairly overrun with visitors. One of our most interesting visits occurred on the first evening we spent in our new quarters.

Tony Larcom was the only one with us at the time, when a soft rap sounded at the door, and, in response to our summons to "come in," the door was opened gently about a foot, and the head of Percy Randall was thrust through the aperture. Immediately Tony Larcom let fly with a book, which hit the door with a

startling thump. The head disappeared like a flash, and a foot appeared instead.

Finding that hostilities were not renewed, the door was at length opened wide, and Percy came in. He approached us with such penitence and humility expressed in his looks that we could hardly repress a smile.

"Now, then, you rascal," said Ray. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing at all," answered Percy meekly. "I came here to give you a chance to have your say. I supposed you'd have lots of great big language saved up for me, and I am ready to take anything."

"Oh, well, words won't do any good," said I.

"Then maybe you want to kick me," rejoined Percy. "Go ahead. Help yourself. I deserve anything."

"We don't care for satisfaction of that kind," answered Ray, with a laugh. "We can't undo anything that has happened. We are in a nice mess on your account, and you can't help us out, so we will have to make the best of it."

"See here, Ray," exclaimed Percy earnestly. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go straight to Dr. Drayton and make a clean breast of it — tell him that I was responsible, and get him to suspend me and take you fellows back. I'll offer to give him information as to the leader in the mischief, on condition that he lets you off your penalty, and then I'll expose myself."

"No, that wouldn't work," I answered. "Dr.

Drayton would never make such a condition in the first place ——"

"Well, I guess if he can make conditions for you, he can take them, too," said Percy.

Ray shook his head.

"No," he said. "It would be useless and foolhardy for you to do that. We appreciate your disposition, Percy, and we thank you for offering, but you must not think of going to Dr. Drayton. It would only get you into trouble, while it would do us no good whatever. They did not suspend us because they thought we were leaders in the trouble, but because we had a *share* in it, and that fact would not be altered by your confession."

"Well, it does seem a shame that you fellows who did the least should suffer for it," he said, as he turned away regretfully.

"It can't be helped now. We can only profit by experience and keep out of your company on future occasions," Ray answered, with a smile.

"Well, boys, I'm sorry I got you into such a fix, and I wish with all my heart that I could get you out," said Percy. He was standing by the door when I called after him.

"Say Percy, do you happen to know who it was that got Ray's match box from me that night?"

"Len Howard, I think," answered Percy from the hall. "He lit the other cannon, I know."

I turned quickly and looked at Ray, who said nothing, but merely raised his eyebrows.

However severe the penalty we were suffering for the sake of the old cannons, we had at least the satisfaction of knowing that it was not in vain. We had no means of learning, except by rumor, of the effect of the expedition upon the Park College men, but, from what we heard, we judged that a tremendous sensation had been created the morning following, by the discovery of what had happened while they were quietly sleeping. They had put themselves to great pains to rob us of the cannons, and they had been planning to celebrate their deed with a great jubilee, so their chagrin and exasperation knew no bounds when they arose to find the prize had been snatched out of their very hands.

The students, however, were helpless, for the matter had gone up into the hands of the faculties of the two colleges. Considerable correspondence occurred, and after several days a committee from each faculty was appointed to confer together. They met and discussed the question thoroughly, and the result was that the Park College committee, on behalf of their college, formally renounced all claims to the cannons for good. Mutual explanations were made, and the gates were returned to Berkeley. But, although these committees parted upon a friendly basis, the feeling of anger on the part of our students, and the chagrin of the Park men, only served to stir up the old, long standing spirit of animosity between the two colleges to renewed heat.

"There will be exciting times when we meet those

fellows on the ball field now," prophesied Tony Larcom. "It has been bad enough in the past, but now things will fairly hum. Phew! Methinks I smell blood already."

"And this is just the season when we want most to beat them," said Ray Wendell.

Our prospects of realizing that end were certainly very bright. The nine had been practising steadily each day, and was rapidly getting into shape. Ray was right when he said we had good material. In all my college life I do not think I ever saw a more promising nine. No changes as yet had been found necessary, and it looked as if we would continue through the season with the nine as first chosen. The men were all good individual players, and, under Ray's efficient captaincy, they were playing together with the utmost harmony and precision. Since our suspension the members of the nine became more devoted to Ray than ever, and his control over them was perfect.

Recognizing the extraordinary good chance we had this season of redeeming Belmont's baseball record of the past two years, we bent every nerve to securing a successful issue, and were regular and assiduous in practice. As the baseball grounds were situated close to the lake and beyond the college, we were unable to reach it conveniently except by a short cut through the college grounds. Since this was forbidden us, Tony Larcom devised the plan of meeting us down by the dock with his boat and rowing us across a por-

tion of the lake to the ball ground. In this romantic and picturesque way we were conducted each day back and forth from practice.

And so the days passed by while we were busily engaged in our exercises and studies. We had as yet heard nothing from either Professor Fuller or Dr. Drayton, but as we found that we were able, with the assistance of our copied notes and Mr. Dikes' instruction, to keep well up with our classes, our anxieties had somewhat subsided. We were content to wait patiently, for the present at least.

The day our first baseball game approached. We had finished our last hour of practice, and were to go over to Dean College the next morning. Ray had given final instructions to the members of the nine to retire early and report at our quarters at eleven o'clock the following day. We were sitting in our room about half past eight in the evening, discussing our chances in the series of games that was about to begin, when we heard a terrific roar in the hall down stairs. The street door was slammed with a noise like a pistol shot, then came the sounds of footsteps clattering up the stairs three steps at a time; our door was flung wide open, and Tony Larcom stood before us, his face flushed, his eyes glistening, waving a letter triumphantly over his head. We gazed at him in silent astonishment.

"Good news! Good news!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, although we were scarcely ten feet away.

A premonition of the truth seized us both at once,

and we sprang forward eagerly. Tony tossed the envelope to Ray.

"There, read that!" he exclaimed, throwing himself on our bed and kicking his heels in the air.

CHAPTER XVII

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

WHILE Tony lay on the bed in convulsions of joy, Ray hastily tore open the large, thick envelope, and drew out two smaller envelopes, both sealed, one of which was addressed to himself, and the other to me. Then for several moments there was a silence, broken only by Tony's chuckling, while Ray and I eagerly scanned the contents of our notes. They were both alike, except for the name, and they ran as follows:

You are hereby notified, in pursuance of the order of the faculty at their meeting last evening, that your term of suspension has been reduced to two weeks, and you will be permitted therefore to resume your college duties on Monday morning next, May 11th.

By order of the Faculty,

FERDINAND DIKES, *Registrar.*

Ray and I looked at each other for an instant, unable to say a word. Our letters dropped to the floor; a glad exclamation escaped us, and then we fell forward into each other's arms, and hugged each other in transports of delight.

Tony Larcom, who was sitting on the side of the bed, watched the demonstration for a while in amused

silence; and then, unable to keep still, he rose and joined us. A good natured scrimmage took place, and the scene was rapidly becoming exciting when a step sounded on the stairs outside.

"Break away, you fellows; somebody is coming," exclaimed Ray.

"Ray, Ray, are you there?" called a strong, cheery voice from the dark hallway. All three of us recognized the tones at once. They recalled vividly the delightful days we had passed at Cedar Hill three weeks before.

"Why, as I live, it must be father," cried Ray, as we turned gladly toward the door, which at that moment swung open.

"Well, at last!" exclaimed Mr. Wendell — for it was he. "I thought I would never find you. I have opened nearly every door in the building, thrust myself suddenly in on scenes where, I judge, I had no business to be, and have ventilated every skeleton the household closets contain. I fear I left the old lady on the first floor with a palpitation at my unexpected entrance."

"No fear of that," answered Ray, laughing, and clasping both his father's hands affectionately. "Mrs. Brown is accustomed to surprises: she has kept a student's club for twenty years, and you couldn't startle her now if you dropped a dynamite cartridge in front of her. She would simply raise her glasses and say, 'Well, what is it?'—— But the surprise is mostly mine this time. What brought you on here?"

"My son's disgrace," said Mr. Wendell, with mock earnestness.

"Oh, you mean our suspension," answered Ray quietly. "Well, then, I have good news for you. Read this," and Ray picked up the letter.

Mr. Wendell, who had shaken hands warmly with Tony and myself, now took a chair, and, putting on his glasses ran his eyes over the contents of the note.

"When did you receive this?" he asked.

"About twenty minutes ago," answered Ray.

"Then I have known all about the matter for about two hours longer than you," said Mr. Wendell.

"How is that?" asked Ray, in surprise.

"I have been having an interview with Dr. Drayton," said Mr. Wendell.

"From all appearances, we seem to be last to hear the good news," said Ray. "Tony, how did you come to know it without opening those letters?"

"I got it out of Mr. Dikes, who gave me the envelopes to hand you," answered Tony. "No one else knows anything about the matter."

"And how did it all come about?" questioned Ray eagerly, seating himself on the sofa near his father. "Tell me everything. How is everybody at home? How did you come to run on here without letting me know anything about it? How did you find Dr. Drayton? And——"

"One question at a time," interrupted Mr. Wendell good naturedly. "Let us start at the very beginning. In the first place, everybody is well at home. Your

mother sends her love and sympathy. I telegraphed her the good news just a short time ago. You did very well, Ray, to write me at once about the matter, explaining everything. It saved both your mother and myself a great deal of anxiety. I suppose, Mr. Elder, you did the same thing?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, "and I received letters from both my parents. My father was called South on business, but he wrote me a long letter, and took very much the same view of the case as you did in your letter to Ray. You see we have compared correspondence for our mutual comfort," I added.

"Well, you were both in rather hard luck," said Mr. Wendell, "but I think we have it all straightened out now. I won't keep you in doubt any longer, but will tell you the whole story from the first. I mentioned, I think, in my letter to Ray that I had also written to Dr. Drayton. The result of that was some considerable correspondence with him, also with this Professor Fuller whom Ray mentioned in his letter, and whom I find to be a very influential member of the faculty. As I had business in Boston to-morrow, it occurred to me that I would do well to come a day earlier, stop over here for a few hours, and see what an interview could effect. Judging from the tone of the letters I received, I imagined that it would be best to visit this Professor Fuller first. I fancied that he would be franker and more open with me, and I could get a better and more complete understanding of both sides of the affair from him. Accordingly I

went to his house as soon as I arrived here; and I must say I found him a delightful man, and all that your enthusiastic descriptions of him have led me to believe. From him I learned that the faculty had resolved last evening to let you off with two weeks. Although Professor Fuller did not say so, I could easily infer from his words that he had been chiefly instrumental in bringing about a reconsideration of your case. He has certainly used his influence in your behalf, and he told me that he had talked the matter over several times with Dr. Drayton, until the president at length consented to bring it up before the faculty. Boys you have a good friend in Professor Fuller."

"No one knows that better than we do," responded Ray quickly. "Professor Fuller promised us nothing, but we knew him of old, and we felt confident of his friendship. We shall never forget his kindness as long as we live."

"He is certainly a very fine man," continued Mr. Wendell, "and — and"— here he hesitated a moment while a mischievous twinkle came into his eye —"and, from the brief but pleasant conversation that I enjoyed with somebody in the hallway at the end of my call, I should say that Professor Fuller had not only a nice disposition but a very nice daughter. Miss Nellie is the name, I think, eh?"

"Miss Nettie," said I, correcting him.

"Nettie, yes, that's the name; and a fine girl she is, too. Full of life and spirits. She takes your part

royally. Hers is a friendship you ought to be proud of. How is it, Ray, you said nothing about Miss Nettie in your letter?"

Ray said nothing now. He was looking at a picture on the opposite wall. His father was enjoying the situation in his good natured, teasing way.

After a silence of several seconds' duration Mr. Wendell, with an expression of increased mirth, suddenly asked:

"What was that you said?"

"I said nothing," answered Ray, with a quiet smile, still gazing at the picture. "Miss Nettie is a very nice young lady, and we are very grateful for her kindness."

"Oh," said his father, with a laugh, "then I suppose we will have to let it go that way. To return; I thanked Professor Fuller for the interest he had shown in the matter, and went over to see Dr. Drayton?"

Here Mr. Wendell took off his glasses, wiped them, and returned them to his pocket.

"Boys," he continued after a pause, "tell me honestly, what do you think of Dr. Drayton?"

"To be perfectly candid, Mr. Wendell," I answered, "I think that, while Dr. Drayton does everything for the best, he has very little tact, and hardly any knowledge of the character of students. It seems very presumptuous in me to criticise our college president in this way, no doubt, but the instances have been so numerous in which he has totally misunderstood the

fellows that I cannot help saying so. It really seems surprising that a man who has been president of a college for ten years should know so little about the nature of boys. He is an excellent scholar, a splendid teacher, and as a rule a good disciplinarian, but every now and then he shows himself altogether out of sympathy with the students, and in such cases is very apt to judge us unfairly."

"And what do you think, Ray?' asked his father, turning to his son.

"Well, I have avoided saying much about Dr. Drayton to you in the past," answered Ray, "for the very reason that my views coincide with Harry Elder's."

"And how about you?" asked Mr. Wendell of Tony Larcom.

"Oh, I think Dr. Drayton is an old *dodo*," answered Tony recklessly.

Mr. Wendell mastered an inclination to smile.

"Your opinion is ruled out of court," he said with as much gravity as he could summon.

Tony subsided.

"I am sure I do not know what you mean by 'want of tact,'" continued Mr. Wendell.

"Well, take our own case for example," answered Ray. "Now, no one who understands human nature at all would ask a student point blank to betray some of his companions in mischief. Almost any one would know that such a question would not only obtain no satisfactory answer, but would arouse in the student a bitter feeling of opposition."

"And did Dr. Drayton ask you such a question?"

"Yes, sir. My match box of course betrayed me, and when I told the faculty I had loaned the box shortly before the cannons were discharged, Dr. Drayton pressed me to tell the name of the person to whom I gave it. Of course I wouldn't answer that."

"Of course not," echoed Mr. Wendell thoughtfully.

"Then again," continued Ray, "think of the way in which this condition about baseball was presented to us. The length of our penalty was made to hang upon our decision as to playing baseball, which had no more to do with the question than sailing on the lake or some other amusement. I think I understand Dr. Drayton partially. He is a man who, when he wants a thing, goes the straightest way to get it, regardless of all considerations. He wanted to know who some of the other fellows were, so without thinking twice, he simply asks me to tell on them. He felt that we were giving too much time to baseball, and he doesn't seem to sympathize with our games much anyhow, so he drags in this condition, and hopes to *force* us into giving up baseball. It was not fair. He might just as well have said that the faculty would make our suspension only two weeks, provided we would promise to eat only two meals a day and devote the time we would gain thereby to our studies. We are as anxious to stand well in our classes as he is to have us do so, and if I felt that baseball would really interfere, I would give it up. But I don't,

and as I had your permission to play baseball, I would not accept Dr. Drayton's conditions."

Mr. Wendell paused a moment before answering.

"Like father, like son," he said at length. "You have said in substance almost exactly what I told Dr. Drayton myself, except, of course, I spoke to him in the respectful manner becoming his office. I told him that I had no objections to your playing ball, and that I saw no reason why it should affect the terms of your suspension. I won't go all over the ground again. Suffice it to say that we had a very plain and, on the whole, agreeable interview. You see, there wasn't very much to be said, for I knew the faculty had decided to let you back, and I was inclined to let well enough alone. I am precisely of your opinion concerning Dr. Drayton. He *does* mean well, and is particularly anxious that his students shall succeed; but, as you say, he is lacking in tact somewhat. He gave me a clear understanding of his side of the matter, however, and I think it is just as well for you to know it.

"He told me he was deeply interested in seeing you both do well in your studies, that he recognized the damage that a five weeks' suspension would do you, and was most willing to decrease the time. He said, however, that he felt that it was only just, when the faculty showed its interest in your success by remitting a large part of this penalty, that you should show your appreciation of this by making some concession on your part. The concession he asked was

that you should give up baseball, which he believed was doing your studies almost as much harm as the suspension. I removed this impression from his mind, or at least, finished doing so, for Professor Fuller had already done most of it, and Dr. Drayton is quite ready to take you back, and treat you well. His annoyance has entirely passed away. I gave him a frank idea of a parent's view of college sports indulged in in moderation, and I think I have partially altered his opinions in the matter."

"Well," I said, "if Dr. Drayton had presented the question to us in the way you mention it would have been different."

"And yet," remarked Ray, "it is better as it is, for now we are readmitted without any condition."

"It is all over now, and you certainly have come out of it pretty well, all things considered," said Mr. Wendell, "and my mind is immensely relieved. I am especially pleased to know that you have kept up your studies. Dr. Drayton spoke of that with considerable commendation. I hope you have lost no ground."

"None at all, I think," answered Ray. "I am sure we are well abreast of our class."

"So am I," broke in Tony. "Having the advantage of lectures and recitations, I used to ask Harry questions and try to coach him, but I soon found that he knew more about the subjects than I did, so I left him alone, in order to keep my own self respect."

Mr. Wendell was looking at his watch.

"How far is it to the depot?" he asked.

"About ten minutes' walk," answered Ray. "But surely you are not going home so soon?"

"Yes," said his father, "I must be in Boston early to-morrow morning, so I must leave here on the 10:30 train. As my valise is at the hotel I had better start now."

All three of us accompanied Mr. Wendell, who kept up a stream of questions about our plans and purposes.

"The last time I saw you three, you were busy with baseball practice out on our lawn at Cedar Hill. You must come out again, and stay longer. I always like to have plenty of live stock on the place," he said jokingly.

"Nothing would please us better," I answered. "We shall never forget the delightful week we spent at Cedar Hill."

"How is your baseball nine?" he asked.

"Very good," answered Ray. "We have seldom had a better nine."

"Going to win the championship?"

"I hope so," said Ray. "We stand a good chance."

"Well, the boys ought to win, if for no other reason than to show their gratitude for your devotion to their interest," said Mr. Wendell. "When does your season open?"

"To-morrow," I answered. "We play Dean College the first game."

"I suppose you will make short work of them?"

"We don't anticipate much trouble in that direction," I said. "Dean College has always stood last

on the list, and we count confidently on a victory over her. We would stand a small show for the championship if we could not beat the Dean men."

"Well, I wish you luck," said Mr. Wendell, as we reached the depot, "and I am very glad that this other matter has been settled satisfactorily."

In a few moments the train came in.

"Good by," said Mr. Wendell, shaking hands all round. "Be good boys now, and keep out of mischief. Give my kindest regards to Professor Fuller, Ray, when next you see him — and don't forget Miss Nettie," he added, as the train moved off.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIRST GAME

About half past ten the next morning Ray and I stood at our accustomed place beside the dock awaiting the approach of Tony Larcom's rowboat, which was to take us over to the baseball grounds, as it had done daily during the past two weeks.

"This is your last trip," said Tony, as he shot his boat along close to the dock, and drew in his oars, "and for my part I am quite agreeable to a change. I think five weeks of this would have made me tired of my boat. My conscience has troubled me greatly about this aiding of two disreputable scamps to defeat the purposes of a college faculty. It is too much like convict trade. I am glad it is over and my conscience can rest."

"Yes, Tony," said Ray, "your conscience needs rest sadly, for, if it is any good at all, it must have been severely taxed during late years on your own account, to say nothing of the 'disreputable scamps' you speak of."

"Well, we'll let it rest, then," laughed Tony. Two strokes of the oars sent us well out, and we were on our way to the ball ground.

Our first duty that morning had been to see Professor Fuller, who congratulated us on getting back, and added to our pleasure by telling us that we might move back our things to our rooms that very evening, so as to be able to begin our duties on Monday morning without further interruption. This, of course, was particularly welcome news to Ray, who longed to be back in his old apartments. Professor Fuller would listen to no thanks, but assured us that our own good conduct had brought about a reconsideration of the matter. We left him seated on his piazza, with Sport's silky brown head resting on his knee, and bestowing upon the old dog a share of the affectionate spirit that ever flowed in a natural stream from the great warm heart of the man.

When we reached our landing place, clambered up the bank, and crossed the road to the ball field, we found the rest awaiting us. As Dean College was only four miles away, we rode over in an omnibus, and, to facilitate matters, we dressed ourselves in our uniforms before starting. On this occasion we used our new suits for the first time, and found ourselves remarkably well pleased with them, both in the fit and colors. The dark blue stockings and braid trimmings, together with the light gray material of which our knickerbockers and blouses were made, presented a very neat and pretty effect.

We received a round of cheers, as we emerged from the clubhouse, and started off, accompanied by two more omnibuses filled with fellow students who were

going over to see the game. The day had been very bright and clear when we started, but towards twelve o'clock clouds began to gather, and the sky assumed a rather threatening aspect. We watched these symptoms at first with anxiety, but, as no rain fell, we were led to hope that the afternoon would pass without any interruption of our game by the weather.

We reached Dean about half past twelve, and were received pleasantly by several members of the nine, who were awaiting us at the entrance of the college grounds. As there was no hotel in the village, we were conducted to one of the eating clubs, where provision had been made for us.

Immediately after lunch, we walked over to the ball grounds, which were situated close to the college. We were very early, for the game was not to be called until two o'clock, so we spent the next half hour in preliminary practice while the crowd of spectators slowly assembled. Each man stood in his position while I batted balls about in various directions. Everything went smoothly. The fellows played in excellent form, with the exception of Fred Harrison, the first baseman, who seemed a little flurried.

"It is quite natural," I said to Tony Larcom, who stood beside me, and had remarked on the matter. "This is Fred Harrison's first game, and he may be a trifle nervous. It will soon wear off."

At about quarter before two o'clock, the gong on the grand stand sounded, and we left the field to make way for the Dean men. We watched their prac-

tice with interest, and noted that they were playing no better than usual. We felt no cause to fear for the result of the game, and accordingly, when time was called, we began with confident assurance of victory.

Dean won the toss, and, therefore, took the field, while Dick Palmer picked out his bat and stepped to the home plate. The second ball pitched he struck far out and past left field, and reached second base in safety. Ray came next to the bat, and made a single base hit, thus bringing Dick home, and scoring the first run.

A chorus of cheers sounded from the two omnibuses at the side of the field, where our friends were gathered, and Dick took his seat with a smile. I was next at the bat, and secured a base hit, which sent Ray to second base. Then Harold Pratt knocked a high fly, which was captured. He was succeeded by George Ives, who had the exceedingly bad taste to strike out. Frank Holland, however, made a safe hit, and gave Ray his third base, while I reached second base.

The bases were now full — a glorious opportunity for the next batter, Alfred Burnett, who had the chance of bringing in three more runs with a safe hit. And yet, in the face of this opportunity, Burnett struck up in the air, and the ball was caught, thus closing out our side with three of us on bases.

I mention this as an instance of the miserable luck that pursued us throughout this game. Certainly the

fickle goddess of fortune that presides over baseball fields had determined to place every possible difficulty in our path. She manifested her evil influence in three ways. In the first place, in situations such as described above, and which occurred again and again during the game until we were fairly exasperated. Secondly, in the weather. The clouds, which had been threatening from the start, began to drop rain at occasional brief periods; and these small showers invariably occurred when most disadvantageous to us. Thirdly, the umpire — that old time bone of contention — without intending in the least to be partial, decided in several successive and important instances against us.

To add to all this, the nervousness which I had noticed in Fred Harrison grew steadily worse as the game advanced. He seemed to lose his head almost entirely at the bat and struck out three out of the four times he came up, while he showed himself sadly demoralized while playing in the field. It was surprising, for Harrison had played well during our days of practice, and of course this change had a bad influence on the rest of the nine.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, we maintained a lead throughout the game until the eighth inning. The score then stood 6 to 4 in our favor, and it looked as if we would finish at those figures. All things considered, we would have been glad to get away with such a record. In the last half of the eighth inning the Dean men succeeded in getting two

single base hits. Then came a long hit to right field, which Lewis Page captured in fine style, but which enabled the two runners to gain a base, so that they now stood on third and second respectively. I succeeded in striking the next man out, so we had but to dispose of one more batter to close the inning.

We all bent ourselves eagerly to the work. I used all possible care and judgment in pitching, and confidently hoped to win the point, for the man at the bat was a weak striker. At the third ball pitched he struck wildly, and tipped the ball high in the air for a pop fly, straight over Fred Harrison's head. Of course the two men on the bases risked the chance of the ball landing safe, and ran around toward home. It all depended on Fred Harrison, who moved backward, and stood waiting for the descent of the ball.

From the manner in which he moved about and shifted his hands, I could see that he was more nervous than ever, and I trembled for the results. I will be fair enough to say that it was no easy fly to catch, especially for a baseman inclined to be nervous. Fred Harrison was all this. He was thinking no doubt of all that depended on his play, while the ball hung there in the air, so that, by the time it reached him, he had lost his head completely, and made a frantic grab at it which proved utterly futile. The ball went through his hands, and dropped to the ground, while the two runners scored, and the game stood 6 to 6.

The next man was put out without trouble, and the inning closed. The crowd in the grand stand

had suppressed their joy as well as possible out of respect to our feelings, but we could not have found fault with any demonstration, for their gain had come so unexpectedly that an outburst of cheers would have been natural. We were out of spirits, and played poorly at the bat during the first half of the ninth inning, the result being that we were retired without a run. It was only when the last of the three men was out that we realized our predicament, and prepared for a desperate tug.

"Fellows," said Ray quietly, but setting his lips firmly, "our reputation is at stake now. You know your duty, so don't fail. We simply *must* put those men out in one, two, three order. Then we can make up our lost ground."

The first man, however, got his base, and, on a passed ball of Dick Palmer's, he reached second. The next two men we disposed of readily; one of them, however, made a sacrifice hit that sent the runner to third base. There were now two out. I pitched a slow outcurve to the next man, who caught it on the end of his bat, and sent it flying along the grounds to my right, but not close enough for me to reach it. George Ives dashed to one side, picked it up neatly, and tossed it to Fred Harrison.

George was a strong thrower, and may perhaps have thrown a little to one side, but the ball was within easy reach of Harrison's hands. The latter, however, in his nervousness, again misjudged the ball; it struck on the tips of his fingers and bounded away,

while the runner on third base reached the home plate, and the game was lost to us by a score of 7 to 6.

The delight of the Dean men may be imagined. They ran about shouting and hugging one another, while we stood for several seconds in our various positions almost unable to realize the truth. Laughing and cheering, the crowd moved off toward the gate, while we despondently gathered up our things and walked silently toward our omnibus.

There we found our friends, but none of them inclined to say anything. There was simply nothing to say. Having gone into the game with feelings of the utmost confidence, our chagrin and humiliation passed all expression. I looked at no one. I simply wanted to be alone — to bury myself in some place where I could not see the reproachful and disappointed eyes that I knew would look upon our return.

But even reproach and disappointment were not the worst I feared. I expected ridicule, for the idea of being beaten by Dean College seemed absurd. Such a thing had never been known at Belmont.

"Don't tell me there is no such thing as luck in baseball," said Tony Larcom's voice behind me.

"Nonsense," I exclaimed impatiently. "What has luck to do with us? With all our hard luck we would have won, but for —— Well, never mind. He feels it no doubt worse than the rest of us, so let us spare him any criticism."

"Just think what a jubilee the Park men will hold to-night when they hear the news! Oh, what can

have gotten into the boys anyhow, to let these fellows get away with us?" said Dick Palmer bitterly.

"It is all clear enough to me," I answered, "but it will do no good to talk about it."

"Small chance we stand for the Crimson Banner now," said somebody.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, let us get away and say no more," I exclaimed, turning abruptly on my heel. "I can't bear to think of it."

We hurried into our omnibus, and, in silence, the three vehicles left the grounds that had been the scene of our disastrous encounter. Though probably much conversation took place in the other omnibuses that would have been unpleasant for us to hear, in our own very little was said. This was chiefly out of respect to poor Fred Harrison, who sat on the front seat, with his chin on his hand.

I was sitting next to Ray Wendell, so I took advantage of the opportunity to ask him in a low tone, unheard by the rest:

"Well, Ray, what do you think of it?"

"I can't understand it," he answered slowly. "Fred was so good in practice. He has disappointed me severely. I do not despair, for I think we can beat Park College yet, and there will be some satisfaction in that, but," he added in a still lower tone, "we will have to make one change in the nine. That is settled."

I nodded my head, for I understood him perfectly.

"I am very sorry for Fred, and I pity him sin-

cerely now, for I know that he is fully aware of the blame that rests on him, and that he is correspondingly unhappy, but he must go. We can't keep him on the nine a day longer. He has about ruined our chances now ——"

Ray was here interrupted by a general exclamation of alarm.

"Stop the horses, quick," cried some one.

Turning hastily we looked forward to see what had occurred. The front seat of the omnibus beside the driver was *empty*. Fred Harrison, who had been leaning well forward, had suddenly disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX

FRED HARRISON

THE driver of the omnibus gave his reins a sharp tug that brought his horses up on their haunches. They became frightened, and kicked viciously in their traces. This added to the general feeling of alarm.

There was an awful hush for a moment as we thought of the possible fate our unfortunate companion might meet from the cruel hoofs of the startled animals. Then several of us sprang hastily to the ground.

Between two of the spokes of the front wheel protruded a leg, clad in the dark blue of our ball suits, while, huddled up under the omnibus, lay the body of Fred Harrison. How he could have got into such an entangled position it is impossible to say, but it was only by a miracle that he had escaped being crushed and mangled. One more turn of the wheel would have doubtless proven fatal.

Without an instant's delay two of us crept under the body of the omnibus, and, carefully avoiding the blows of the horses' hoofs, drew Fred gently out, and laid him upon his side on the grass. He seemed scarcely to breathe; his face was pale and still. Ray

dropped on his knees, and put his hand upon the poor fellow's breast.

"Run, get some water quick," he said.

We turned in consternation and looked about us. Where should we go? We were on a deserted country road. There were no houses in sight to which we could apply for assistance, no stream near by from which we could procure water. We were utterly helpless and alone. The other omnibuses containing our companions had disappeared in the distance ahead of us.

"Oh! what shall we do?" I exclaimed. "Is there no way we can help the poor fellow?"

"I think he has only fainted," said Ray, with his face close to Fred's. "We must find something to bring him to."

Suddenly Tony Larcom uttered a quick exclamation of relief, and leaped back into the omnibus, where he began searching under the seat for something.

"I have it," he cried, as he joined us again, carrying in his hand a large bottle full of the raw whisky which we used to bathe bruises and sprains. "Here, use this. It is pretty bad stuff to swallow, but it will help him."

Ray seized the bottle, and placing it to Fred's mouth, forced his lips open. A few swallows produced an almost immediate change. Fred took a long breath, moaned once or twice, then opened his eyes.

For a moment he seemed surprised, but this ex-

pression quickly gave way to one of pain. He uttered a sharp cry and again closed his eyes. The color had entirely forsaken his lips. Evidently he had sustained some injury of which we knew nothing. We attempted to raise him up in order to make his position more comfortable, when he gave vent to another cry.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tony Larcom. "No wonder the poor fellow suffers! Look at his right arm. It must be broken."

For the first time we noticed that Fred's arm hung limp and distorted. The shirt at the elbow was torn, and disclosed an ugly looking bruise from which the blood was slowly oozing.

"He must have been kicked by the horses," said Ray. "Here, fellows, we ought not to delay a minute, but get him into the hands of a doctor as soon as possible."

Accordingly, we lifted him as gently as the circumstances permitted, and laid him upon one of the cushioned seats of the omnibus. He made little noise while we handled him. He seemed to have fainted again with pain. We rested him upon his left side so that his right arm should lie quietly and without contact. Then Ray sat at his head, bathing his face, while I sat at his feet to hold him still and to prevent the rolling of the omnibus from jarring him.

Fortunately the road was smooth, so we were able to make good time on the way home.

The episode had driven everything else from our

mind. Even the game and our humiliating defeat were forgotten in our solicitude for the unfortunate student who lay groaning on the seat beside us.

"How did it all come about?" asked Ray. "What made him fall in that way?"

"It is a perfect mystery," answered George Ives, who had been sitting just beside Harrison. "He was sitting there quietly on the front seat, with his head in his hand. I thought he had a headache, or perhaps was feeling badly broken up over the game, but I didn't suppose for a moment that there was anything else the matter with him. Suddenly I saw him sway from side to side unsteadily, and before I or the driver could catch him, he fell head foremost down upon the traces, and rolled under the omnibus. How he caught in that wheel I can't imagine, but he must have been dragged several feet before we stopped."

"Has Fred been complaining of being unwell?" I asked.

"Not to me," said George. "I must say I can't understand him to-day at all."

"I think he simply lost his head," I answered. "It was his first game of ball. He was very anxious to do well, and became nervous. Of course this grew worse as he found himself playing badly."

"Yes; but how do you explain his tumbling over in this strange way?" asked Tony.

"I suppose the fatigue of the game, and its discouraging results, may have reacted on his nerves and produced vertigo," I answered.

"I hardly believe that," said Ray. "There must be some reason. I don't know what to think. I thought I had judged Harrison correctly when we chose him for the nine. I counted on some little nervousness, for he is a Freshman, and has had no experience on the ball field, but I did not look for such a complete demoralization as this to-day. Did any of you speak much to him during the game? Did you notice how confused his ideas seemed to be? Why, in the fourth inning, when we took the field, he started to go to third base instead of first, and only stopped when I spoke to him. Were such a thing possible, I could almost believe the fellow had been drugged."

I had reached out at this moment to place Fred's right arm in a more comfortable position, when my hand struck something hard which protruded partly from his inside coat pocket.

"Why, what is this?" I exclaimed, drawing it out to view.

It was a small brandy flask, half emptied.

"Jerusalem, the boy has been drinking!" cried Tony Larcom, as the whole truth of the affair suddenly dawned on him.

"Not a doubt of it," said Frank Holland, who was a classmate of Harrison's. "It was only last night that Fred told me that he was going to be nervous to-day, and said that he wished he could take something to strengthen him. I told him that he would

be only the worse for it, and so he said no more about it."

Ray had taken the bottle from me.

"I am afraid it is true," he said.

"No wonder he was upset," said Tony. "He must have been fairly stupefied. What on earth possessed him to do such a thing? He knew the rule that no member of the nine should touch stimulants."

"He has certainly made a bad mistake," said Ray. "I wish I could have advised him in time."

Little more was to be said. The matter seemed clear enough now, and foolish as Fred Harrison had been, we could only pity him in his present helpless condition.

We reached Belmont about six o'clock, and drove immediately to the dormitory where Fred roomed. One of our number was despatched for a doctor, while others carried the still partially unconscious student up to his room.

The doctor arrived in a few minutes, and made a hasty examination.

"The arm is not broken," he said. "It is slightly dislocated. Two or three of you hold him tightly a moment."

We followed his directions at once. Then the doctor planted his foot firmly against the bed, grasped the arm with both hands, bent and twisted it until we thought he would sever it from the body, and then suddenly turned it skilfully back into its proper position.

During the operation Fred had cried incessantly with pain, but when the bone had resumed its place, his muscles relaxed, and his head sank back with a long sigh of relief.

The doctor was now examining his wrist.

"There is a sprain here that will probably give him trouble for two or three weeks," he said.

"Is there anything else to do?" I asked.

"Nothing but to make him easy," he answered. "I will treat his arm and wrist and bind them up. Then one of you had better remain with him to attend to his wants."

Tony Larcom, being the only one of us in his ordinary clothes, consented to stay, while Ray and I agreed to change our suits and return immediately after dinner to relieve Tony. Dick Palmer had already gone over to the telegraph office to send word to Fred's parents, who lived at Springfield. Feeling that everything had been done to contribute to the invalid's comfort, the rest of us took our departure, leaving Fred in the hands of Tony and the doctor.

CHAPTER XX

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

"Ah, this is like old times!" exclaimed Ray with genuine satisfaction, as he sunk back into the large easy chair that stood by the hearth in his front room.

"Yes," I answered. "It seems months since we were in these rooms before. They appear to have been well cared for; no dust anywhere."

"Oh, I told the janitor I was going to return this evening, so he was in here during the morning cleaning. Now let us light up the gas and make ourselves comfortable."

Ray scratched a match, and lit every burner in the room. "An illumination in honor of our return," he called out, while I put down the parcels I had carried over for Ray, and dropped on the sofa, stretching myself out at ease.

At dinner Ray had asked me to help him to get a few of his things over from the room we had occupied, as he was anxious to take possession of his old apartments without delay. Accordingly we gathered his necessities together, and brought them with us on our way back to Fred Harrison's room, where we expected to find Tony.

We discovered, however, that Harrison's roommate had come in during our absence, and had relieved Tony, who had gone away shortly before we arrived. We found Fred resting quietly, and, though still suffering some pain, much improved in condition. He seemed greatly distressed when he saw us, and in a broken and almost tearful voice confessed having taken brandy before the game, and condemned himself for his folly in unmeasured terms.

The sorry exhibition he had made of himself, and the injury he had sustained, affected him but little. These he regarded as but the natural consequents of his foolish act, which he fully deserved; but that the college should have suffered so humiliating a defeat through his weakness grieved him most, and he could find no words of self reproach severe enough. We comforted him as best we could, and then left him with the promise that we would call the next morning.

"And now," said Ray, as he drew the heavy curtains to, "I could almost feel reconciled even to our absurd defeat, it is so pleasant to get back here again. We can lie off and look at the matter calmly and comfortably." Here he resumed his chair.

"Comfortably, I own, but scarcely calmly yet," I answered. "I am already suffering in anticipation, under the reproachful looks of the students. We will have to face them all to-morrow, and, for my part, I must say I am scarcely equal to the ordeal."

"Oh, pshaw! I don't mind that," said Ray. "Be-

sides, I think you exaggerate the matter. I don't think the fellows will make us feel uncomfortable. We did our level best and they know it. They know as well as we do what lost us the game; and, in view of his hard luck, they will treat poor Fred with the utmost indulgence."

"But just think of our condition now. Our chances for the championship are lost. This defeat is a damper from which we are not likely to recover during the whole season. I don't see how you can look at that calmly," I said, with some show of impatience.

"Well," rejoined Ray, with a smile, "I must be brutal enough to say that I do. Perhaps you are right about the championship. The prospects are certainly not encouraging now, but I still hold the conviction that we can beat Park College, and there will be infinite satisfaction to me in that."

"What change of positions on the nine have you in mind?" I asked.

"I'd put Harold Pratt on first base," said Ray. "He is tall and has a long reach. Then, for a new third baseman, I should choose Percy Randall by all means."

"Haven't you had enough of Percy Randall?" I asked with a smile.

"In one way, yes, quite enough," answered Ray, "but on the nine and under my control, I think he would make an excellent man."

"I agree with you," I said, after a moment's con-

sideration. "The man isn't born who could rattle Percy Randall."

"I suppose he will be glad enough to play," observed Ray.

"Glad!" I answered. "He will never cease to thank us for another opportunity to get even with those Park men. He will play like a young tiger."

"I think the best thing we can do then is to notify him at once," said Ray. "I have some of the letter heads of the Baseball Association in my desk. I will write without delay and tell him to be on hand Monday noon for practice."

Ray rose, and went to the roll top desk which stood near one of the windows. Taking his key from his pocket, he fitted one into the lock and tried to turn it. It caught in some way and would not move. Pressing on the sliding top, the desk, to his surprise, opened readily.

"Why, it is unlocked!" he exclaimed. "That is very curious. I am very sure that I locked it when I left two weeks ago, and nobody — why, confound it! What is all this?"

I got up hastily and joined him.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Matter enough. Look at the confusion here — the ink bottle upset all over a lot of my papers, and everything turned topsy turvy. Oh, this is simply exasperating! I put everything away with scrupulous care in this desk. There are papers here that I wouldn't have touched for anything. I suppose that

stupid old janitor has upset things in moving the desk."

"But why was it unlocked?" I asked anxiously.

"I haven't the least idea. I am sure I did not leave it so, for I kept valuable things here. In this drawer I kept my bank deposit book."

Ray opened the drawer as he spoke. It was *perfectly empty.* He looked at me in speechless astonishment as he fumbled about in the vacant drawer.

"Why, the old thief," he burst out angrily, "he must have been robbing me this morning. Here, wait a minute, I'll find out about this," and Ray dashed out into the hall.

In about ten minutes he returned with a puzzled and bewildered expression on his face.

"Learn anything?" I asked.

Ray shook his head.

"I am further off than before. Old Jarvis swears that he hasn't been in the room," he said.

"But I thought you said he had been cleaning up here this morning," I remarked wonderingly.

"So I believed, but he tells me that Ridley was the only one who came in, and that he spent not more than fifteen minutes here, dusting around a little. Ridley says that he tried to open the desk in order to clean it out, but found it locked."

"Then it was locked this morning?"

"If they say what is true. I don't know whether to believe them or not, appearances are so bad."

"I can hardly believe that either Ridley or old Jarvis would steal in that way," I said.

"I hate to think so, but what other solution is there? They certainly did not act or speak as if they had done it. Both of them were badly worried over it, but they seemed to be innocent. I told them that the thief could be traced by the bank book."

"That is no severe loss," I said, "for you can advise the bank about the matter without delay, and they will watch out for the fellow that took it."

"No, that does not make me uneasy," answered Ray. "It is the doubt about the thief that troubles me. I wonder whether he disturbed anything else."

Ray took out a match and entered the adjoining room. Scarcely a second had passed after he disappeared from view, when there came a sharp, quick cry, then a succession of harsh exclamations, the rapid shuffling of feet, and the sounds of a fierce struggle. It lasted but a moment, and before I had time to realize the situation, and hurry to Ray's assistance, before I had half reached the door, Ray emerged from the darkness of the other room, panting heavily, and dragging by the neck a crouching, struggling fellow who was fighting hard to shake himself loose.

We seized him roughly, and together threw him upon the sofa, Ray putting one hand upon his breast.

Then for the first time the full light of the gas fell on the face of our captive. It was Len Howard.

CHAPTER XXI

A TERRIBLE CONFESSION

Ray staggered back.

"Howard — you here!" he gasped.

Howard said nothing, but remained gazing doggedly at the floor.

"Answer me!" cried Ray, as the first shock of surprise subsided. "What are you doing in this room?"

Howard replied hesitatingly, as if scarcely knowing what to say:

"I saw the door open — and — and when Ridley went out into the hall for a moment — I — I stepped in, thinking you might have returned. Ridley closed the door and locked me in."

As the door was fastened by a spring lock, easily opened from the inside, the transparency of this excuse was pitiable, and showed how desperate was Howard's position.

"And I suppose, not finding me here, you determined to await my return," said Ray, suppressing his feelings with difficulty.

Howard remained silent.

"And in the interval you occupied yourself looking

over my things," continued Ray, pointing to his desk.

Still no answer.

"Howard," said Ray contemptuously, "what are we to think of you?"

"Think what you choose," answered Howard bitterly. "Think the worst of me. Every one will think the same in a few days."

Ray did not seem to notice the significance of these words.

"Do you realize that you are committing a crime?" he said. "Don't you know that I could have you arrested for this?"

"I know it," answered Howard; "but why should I care now?"

"Care!" exclaimed Ray, aghast at the other's tone. "Have you no respect for your good name?"

"Good name!" echoed Howard, still more bitterly. "Where will that be in a day or two? No, I have no reason to respect my 'good name.' I own that I came in here dishonestly. Go on, then, and expose me."

"I did not say I was going to expose you," answered Ray.

"But you will," said Howard. "What else should I expect from you?"

"I do not know that I will," said Ray.

Howard looked up quickly.

"You mean to say that you — you —" then his face clouded again as he continued —"still, after all what

difference could that make to me? Only a few days. You might as well do your worst."

"Howard," cried Ray, with determination, "I do not say yet what I will do, but of one thing you may be sure. I intend to have an explanation of this strange behavior of yours. If you were simply a common burglar I should turn you over to justice without more ado; but you are not, you are a classmate of mine, and, as such, your act is simply one of madness. No student in his senses would attempt a thing of this kind. I am convinced that it was a desperate act on your part, and that you were driven to it by some extraordinary cause. I am determined, therefore, before going any further, to know your reason for acting and talking in this strange manner."

A curious expression came over Howard's face as Ray spoke. This evidence of interest in him on Ray's part was entirely unexpected by Howard, and wrought quite a change in him. Like some hunted animal, who has suddenly found a momentary resting place, his nervousness and agitation diminished, his manner became more composed, and his bitter tone gave way to one of passive dejection. He leaned his head heavily on his hands, and gazed despondently at the floor.

"You are right," he said in a voice that was scarcely audible, "I was desperate. I would never have stooped to this if a chance of retaining my reputation was left. It was my last throw. Ruin is staring me in the face!"

"Ruin!" exclaimed Ray. "Why, Howard, what can you mean? What have you done?"

"Ruined myself — utterly — I don't care what happens now."

A struggle was going on in Ray's breast. His face lost some of its severity.

"Tell me your whole story, Howard," he said, in a somewhat altered tone. "Why did you come in here?"

"To steal — yes, give it the worst name — to steal. It *was* an act of madness, but what else was there for me to do? I had done almost everything else, and exposure and disgrace stared me in the face," and Howard's voice broke.

"Exposure! disgrace! For what?" asked Ray, in great concern. "Come, speak out. Tell me all."

Howard was silent a moment.

"I might as well speak," he said at length, "for everybody will know it soon."

Ray and I remained silent, breathless and expectant, while a death-like stillness settled upon the room. After several minutes Howard roused himself slightly and began:

"I can scarcely bear to think of it. It has been growing a heavier weight on my mind for weeks past, haunting me at night, destroying my sleep, and depriving me of all peace, until to-day, when I could stand it no longer, and was about to — but I will tell you the whole story. My trouble really began away back in Freshman year. You remember that wealthy

Cuban, Rapello, in the Senior class at that time. You remember his companion and roommate, Leisenring, and the whole crowd with whom they went, and you remember warning me against them as dangerous company. I felt able to take care of myself, and, as I was very much flattered by the attention of these upper classmen, I went with them constantly, as you know. You may not know, however, that a great deal of card playing was done in their rooms, and always for money. As my father is a clergyman, I was never allowed to look at cards at home, so I first became acquainted with the game in the company of those fellows. I became fascinated with it, and naturally too, for I was very fortunate, and won a great deal of money during Freshman year. During Sophomore year I was still more fortunate, and began to look upon my luck as assured, and to play with boldness and confidence. In Junior year the men whom I had associated with had nearly all graduated; so my next step was to form my room into a similar establishment to that of Rapello and Leisenring's, and to draw in some of my companions and such of the under classmen as I could influence.

"I worked very cautiously, and kept it very quiet, but my room during Junior year was scarcely better than a downright gambling den. Late into the nights we played, with drawn curtains, and our stakes ran even higher than had been known in the games of Rapello and Leisenring. I always forced the play boldly, taking pride in my reckless daring and the

luck that almost invariably attended it. A change, however, came at last, and toward the end of Junior year I began to suffer heavy reverses. The passion for play had by this time taken thorough possession of me, and I could not give up the game. My position as the leader, moreover, made it doubly difficult for me to retire, had I wanted to. At the beginning of Senior year, when I returned to college, I had lost all I had ever won.

"Thinking that my luck would turn, I began the game again in my rooms. Only a few college students rejoined me, for the stakes had grown high, so I sought a few companions among some of the men of the town. They were older than I, and had, as a rule, considerable money. After a month or so the game was transferred from my room — where it was risky — to a place in town. Here my ill luck began again, and all during the winter I continued to lose, until I had nothing left. Then, still unable to give up the game, and always hoping to recover my lost ground, I began to play on borrowed money. This continued until my credit was gone amongst my friends, then I played for a while without money, paying my losses in promissory notes.

"As I saw these notes coming due, and found myself unable to meet them, I grew desperate, and stooped to a number of half dishonest devices in order to secure the cash needed. I can't mention all these. They made me feel ashamed at first, but necessity forced me, and I soon became used to it. Things that

had previously seemed mean and despicable to me, became matters of indifference. I found myself excusing acts that had always aroused my contempt. At length I got down to cheating — I couldn't help it. I had to have money. I didn't cheat in the games with town men. I couldn't do that — they were too sharp for me; but I would play smaller games with under classmen and win money by unfair practices. In doing this I was very careful, and was never suspected. Those from whom I have obtained money in this way are good friends, and have never supposed me guilty of dishonorable dealing. But it weighed on me and destroyed my peace of mind. I was always uneasy and in fear of being detected, so I looked about me for other means of obtaining money.

"It was then that tennis occurred to me. I began to bet on my playing, not in small sums — I had done that often before — but heavily. Some one dared me to play you, saying that you could beat me. I made a bet of twenty-five dollars on the result, and invited you to play me. That bet I lost, as you know, and you refused to give me an opportunity of recovering that loss. At that time I was specially hard pressed for money, and ready to do almost anything to secure it. Suddenly an idea occurred to me that seemed to promise well. If I could interest the college in contributing to lawn tennis I might make use of the money appropriated for this purpose, and obtain temporary relief from the debts that were pressing me so hard. I did not contemplate actually steal-

ing the money. I only wanted to gain time until I could raise more money in some other quarter.

"I had it all arranged that I should be nominated for treasurer in case the college took up with my idea, and I would have no difficulty in being elected, as I had always been so prominent in tennis. I took advantage of the fact that baseball stock seemed low, and tried to draw the college toward tennis. You know how my effort failed, but you do not know how desperate that failure made me. I was angry with everybody, especially with you, whom I believed to be chiefly to blame — you see I don't mind telling all this. I can do myself no harm now."

"But Howard," cried Ray aghast, "could even that bring you to such an act as this? Could ——"

"No. The worst is to come. That only made me angry, and it was because I was angry with you that I intercepted your letter about the baseball meeting. It was merely to get square with you. It was mean and small, I know, but it isn't the worst I have done.

"Of course I was compelled to carry my debts for a while longer, and as this was becoming more and more difficult on account of the growing impatience of my creditors, I was at my wits' end to know what to do. Some notes had come due, others were impending, and the men — who had been friendly enough at the start — refused to extend the time, and threatened to force me to payment. Of course I did not fear legal prosecution for a debt contracted at cards, but I dreaded exposure, and the disgrace that would

follow. So it continued until last Wednesady night.

"It was then that I cast all caution to the winds, and determined to make a bold move at cards. I had not been playing lately, for I had no money, and the others had refused to trust me for any further amounts. But Wednesday night I received a little money from home and I went to the usual place. I feared that they would keep me from the game on account of my unpaid debts, so I told them that I had only fifteen dollars, and as they seemed to be in a good humor they let me in, each of my creditors, I suppose hoping that I would win enough to pay off his claim. I was reckless of consequences, and had come to win by any means fair or unfair. As I might have supposed, in such an experienced crowd, I was detected before I had cheated half a dozen times, and then a terrible storm arose. I thought I would be torn to pieces. They rose in a body, calling me a swindler and blackleg, and put me out of the place. Before leaving they dictated the terms of payment of the money I owed them. They told me that unless the notes that were due were paid by Saturday they would expose me to the town and faculty and so ruin my character as well as my chances of graduation.

"I knew not where to turn. My first impulse was to run away, anywhere, so as to be free from the terrible burden that was growing on me. Every resource had been exhausted, and exposure and disgrace awaited me. Oh, such a night of agony as I

passed! I lay awake, racking my brain for some method of escape. Suddenly I thought of Professor Fuller. It was humiliating to think of visiting him on such an errand, but I knew that I must obtain money somewhere, and that he had been kind to the boys, so I resolved to call on him. I did so the next morning. I did not tell him the story, but said I owed money to tradesmen in town, that they were pressing me hard and threatened trouble, that I didn't want to ask my father at once for more money, as I had just received some from home; and I solicited his help for a short time. The more pressing debts amounted to $100, and this sum he lent me.

"This was Thursday, and I was going to pay the four notes that were due at once, when it suddenly occurred to me that Saturday's game with Dean College might win me some more money if I could get several bets. Accordingly I saved the money, and took it over to Dean. I succeeded in staking it all, and I felt confident of the result, for we had never been beaten by Dean. To my amazement we lost the game, and my case was utterly hopeless. Every cent was gone, and I had no means of gaining more.

"Every resource had been exhausted, and I had only to wait for the crash that was sure to come. I was dazed and benumbed at the prospect. There was nothing for me to do. Every vestige of hope had left me. I was simply ruined. When I came back I started for my room with no special purpose in mind, when I saw your door ajar. As I told you,

Ridley was in the hall. He was filling your pitcher at the back of the building and did not see me. I scarcely knew why I came in. When Ridley closed the door, I began to look about. I did not expect your return, for I supposed you were still living in town. I took my time, therefore, and was examining the contents of your desk when I heard you in the hall."

CHAPTER XXII

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

HOWARD paused and looked up at Ray with a dazed, hopeless expression of face. Neither Ray nor I spoke a word for several minutes. We had listened to Howard's narrative with mingled feelings of horror and pity. Neither of us had known him except as a college mate; and while we had never been attracted to him, we had not, until recently, found any cause to dislike him. We knew him to be one of a fast crowd, and had always avoided a chance of close companionship. Of his gambling proclivities we had known a little and suspected more.

Rumors had reached us of the card playing that was carried on in his room during Junior year; but we had supposed that this was broken up, and knew nothing of his joining a crowd of town men. His confession was therefore a terrible shock to us, revealing as it did a far greater familiarity with vicious habits than we ever suspected him of, and showing to what depths he had sunk. We could scarcely believe our ears, and only the convicting circumstances under which we had found him in Ray's room made the story credible.

Ray was looking at him fixedly, his face clearly indicating the strange feelings that filled his breast.

"But, Howard," he said at length, "I am still unable to understand this last act of yours. Your case is desperate, I own, but what could have brought you in here? To steal, you say. Yet, it is hard to believe that you have sunk so low."

"Understand it! Of course you can't understand it," burst out Howard. "You must go through all that I have to understand it. You must yield first to one temptation and then to another, and so on down, down, down, till there seems to be nothing left to stand on; till you have lost all pride, all self respect, and care for nothing, till you are perfectly hopeless, and ruin and wretchedness stare you in the face; till you tremble instinctively at every footstep, fearing that exposure is on your track, till everybody seems to point you out as a guilty, contemptible wretch, and you grow reckless, desperate, and don't care where you go or what you do; then, then you will understand this mad act, and then you will understand what I feel now."

"Howard," cried Ray, his voice trembling with feeling, "don't speak so. It is terrible."

"It is only the truth," answered Howard, his tone resuming its former key of despondency. "When I came in here I was half dazed, and scarcely knew what I was doing. I had some vague idea of getting money or valuables some way, and averting the crash for a while. When I saw your door open I remem-

bered that you had handsome rooms and many costly things, and before I could think twice I was in. Driven to extremes as I was, I did not reason the matter, but began searching for money or something that would bring money. Oh, don't try to shame me by calling it bad names! It isn't necessary. With all that I have done, I felt that I was a wretched, despicable criminal every minute that I went about plundering your things. As it is I'm glad — yes, I'm glad I'm caught. It is all over with me, and it serves me right."

Howard's words cut me keenly. Such utter wretchedness I had never witnessed. His voice was broken, his eyes full of tears.

Whatever may have been the struggle in Ray's bosom, it was plainly over now. He rose, and stepped forward to where Howard was sitting. The latter did not look up.

"Howard," Ray said firmly, "you have sunk low — very low, indeed. You have reached the bottom. Do you suppose you could ever build yourself up again?"

Howard looked up in wonder at the question.

"Build myself up? No. I'll never have the chance. I'm down, and I have no such hope."

"But when you had a chance," continued Ray, "before it was too late, did you never think about yourself, and see where you were going?"

"Not until I was going too fast to stop," answered Howard despondently. "Then I thought — oh, the

many nights I spent thinking, thinking, thinking! Longing to have a clean record and a fresh start! Oh, I can look back now, easy enough, and say what I would do if I had a chance — but it is useless. Here I am helpless — everlastingly disgraced. And then there is my father, poor old man. He would gladly help me, but he can't. He has sent me all the money he had. He couldn't afford to send me more, and it will — yes, I know it will nearly kill him to know the truth. Oh, I wish I could die!"

Howard, with a cry fell forward on his knees, buried his face in his hands, and burst into a wild fit of weeping.

Howard's emotion stirred me deeply.

"Oh, Ray!" I exclaimed. "This is terrible."

Ray did not seem to hear me. He leaned forward and placed his hand on Howard's shoulder. His face was pale and quiet.

"Howard," he said in a low tone, "I am in earnest when I ask you my question. Would you profit by a chance if it were offered you? I mean, would you profit by your hard experience and make a man of yourself if you had the opportunity?"

Howard stopped instantly, and remained breathless for several seconds. He scarce dared believe all that Ray's words implied.

"Would I profit by it?" he cried, "Yes, yes, yes. If I only had a chance to prove it! Oh, the vows that ——"

"I want no vows," interrupted Ray, speaking quickly. "Your promise is enough."

Howard looked up, an expression of yearning in his face. Scarcely hoping, yet longing to find encouragement in Ray's words, he exclaimed:

"Why, Wendell — Ray — Ray — you mean to say ——"

"That you shall have a chance, Howard," answered Ray firmly. "I will trust you, and pay your debts, and you are to try to make a man of yourself."

Howard uttered a quick, inarticulate cry, and sprang to his feet.

"First calm yourself," said Ray, "and sit down on the sofa there."

Howard passively obeyed him.

"Now tell me how much you owe altogether."

"Nearly eight hundred dollars," answered Howard slowly.

"And one hundred must be paid at once?"

"Yes — to-night."

"And the payment of these debts will set you on your feet again, and give you a fresh start?"

"Yes — all but those town fellows. They know that I cheated."

"The money will quiet them, I think," answered Ray. "Now, listen to me, Howard. Your case is not so desperate. Your debts need only to be paid to secure your reputation, and then you can face the world honestly. I will pay these —— first of all this hundred dollars. I have somewhat over that amount

in the National Bank, and I will give you a check at once. This you can take this evening to those men and shut their mouths. Now as to those other debts ——"

Here Ray started toward his desk, recollected himself, turned toward Howard and said as gently as possible:

"Howard, kindly tell me where you put my bank book."

Howard turned scarlet as he tremblingly took Ray's bank book from his pocket.

"I don't know why I took it," he said in a shame faced manner. "I could never have used it."

Ray received it without a word, opened it, and examined the columns of figures.

"There are two hundred and ten dollars to my credit in the bank," he said, "and I can get more from my father when it is needed. Monday morning you must pay back Professor Fuller first of all. The other debts I will meet as they come due. Now I must give you that check."

Ray drew a chair up to the desk, and opening a small drawer, took out a check book, and settled himself to write.

Until now Howard had accepted the situation while hardly able to comprehend it. It seemed to be too good to be true, and yet Ray's cool and decided manner carried assurance beyond doubt. Such unexpected generosity from one whom he had regarded as an enemy was a revelation to him, and it was beginning

to work in him just the change that Ray desired. He sat silent and thoughtful while Ray wrote.

I moved forward, and, bending over Ray's shoulder, said:

"If I can help you out, Ray, I have some savings which I should be glad to put in."

Ray looked up a moment, and answered in a tone too low for Howard to hear:

"Thanks, Harry, but I think it would be better to do it all up by myself. You know what I mean. He would feel like a beggar if two or three contributed. Better let me finish it."

At this moment Howard looked up.

"Wendell," he began, "why do you take this heavy risk? You know nothing but bad of me——"

"Because I expect to know nothing but good of you hereafter," answered Ray promptly. "I have your promise, haven't I?"

"With all my heart," responded Howard fervently. "But how can I ever repay the loan? I can never rest until it is paid up to you, and you know I am not wealthy."

"Take your time. I can trust you," answered Ray. "There is your check, now, so you must hurry off and get rid of your tormentors. The others we can attend to later. There is no one else knows anything of this?"

"No one," answered Howard, "except perhaps Jarvis down stairs. He may not understand about

the disturbance of your desk. You know you spoke to him about it."

"Yes, so I did," said Ray. "Never mind, I will see him and tell him that it is all right. I will explain the matter satisfactorily. Now you'd better hurry, for it is getting late."

Howard started toward the door. After two or three steps he turned hesitatingly.

"Wendell — Ray — would you mind shaking hands with me?" he asked.

Ray extended his hand immediately. Howard seized it convulsively with both of his, while his whole frame quivered, and tears started to his eyes afresh. It was but a moment, and then Howard turned to go away. He had already reached the door when something seemed to occur to him, and he wheeled about and came back.

"Ray," he said, "there is something else I must tell you. You remember the night we brought the cannons back from Berkeley. It was I that borrowed your match box that night, and I dropped it by the cannon on purpose."

Howard paused.

"I knew it," answered Ray quietly, "or at least, felt quite sure of it. Well, what of it?"

"Well, I thought you ought to know it, that was all," answered Howard. Then without another word he passed out of the door.

Ray stood looking after him thoughtfully. I came up and touched him on the arm.

"Ray," said I, "you are a splendid fellow."

"Why, no," he answered. "I only did what I think is a fellow's duty. Howard will never forget to-night. He will keep his promise. Just wait and see."

CHAPTER XXIII

RENEWED HOPES

Ray Wendell was right when he said that I exaggerated the effect that our defeat would have upon our college mates. They were surprised and disappointed, it is true — bitterly disappointed, for they had shared our confidence in the nine; but fortunately we had numerous witnesses in the omnibus load of companions who accompanied us, and who knew well enough where the trouble lay, and what had caused our defeat. To these witnesses I soon felt a genuine debt of gratitude, for it speedily became evident that the reports which they brought back from the game were as charitable to the team as could possibly be expected under the circumstances.

The greetings which we received were kind and considerate. Fellows took pains to make us feel the humiliation as little as possible. Early Monday morning I met Clinton Edwards, and his first words, as he shook hands with me, were, "Harry, you played a fine game — steady and true right through to the end. I am very sorry you had such hard luck. It was no fault of yours, nor the others in fact, except Fred Harrison, that we didn't win."

And this was the general expression of feeling on every hand, no one showing the least disposition to find fault with the team, but all ready to attribute the result to ill fortune, and to extend their sympathy. Even poor Fred Harrison came in for as much pity as condemnation for his foolish act.

The disposition on the part of the college put new spirit into us, and renewed our purpose to go in and regain our lost ground. That we could entirely recover ourselves and win the Crimson Banner of course seemed next to impossible, but we pinned our hope to the game with the Park men. Should we be able to defeat them, we would feel largely compensated even for the loss of the championship. I shared Ray's opinion that our chances of defeating Park College were very fair, for I felt confident that our team in its altered form, with Percy Randall on third base, would do fine work, and such rumors as had come from Berkeley had not reported very favorably on the Park nine.

I did not, however, rely too much on these rumors, for it had been a favorite dodge of the Park men to start reports of their condition, in order to deceive and mislead their opponents. Of the truth concerning their nine we could learn more after the following Wednesday, when the Park and the Halford teams played together. Ray Wendell determined to go over to see this game in order to obtain points that it might be to our advantage to know. I could not accompany him, for I had a recitation on that day,

but Clinton Edwards agreed to go over, and upon his and Ray's experienced judgment we could rely for a proper estimate of the abilities of our opponents.

Fred Harrison improved rapidly, but was compelled to carry his arm in a sling for some time, and was forbidden by the doctor to play ball again during the spring, so that Ray was relieved of all difficulty in disposing of him. Fred was heartily ashamed of himself, and for a long time after the game could not bear to speak of the matter. The fellows, knowing well how mortified and humiliated he was, were careful to treat him with as much consideration as possible, and no thoughtless or unkind word from them ever reminded him of that unfortunate day at Dean.

What brought mortification to Fred, however, made Percy Randall happy. The latter had been disappointed in missing a position on the nine in the first place, and the change which unexpectedly brought him a place delighted him.

The hope of improvement which Ray had expressed became confirmed in me the moment I saw Percy step out on the diamond Monday noon. He had received his notification during the morning, and came down to the grounds with a smiling face and an air of pride. It had certainly paid us to encourage him, for the way he took hold of balls, and the dash and vim with which he played, convinced me that we had nothing to fear from that quarter. As I watched him, I could only wonder that we had not seen the stuff that was in him before. As we anticipated, too,

his spirit was contagious, and all the fellows played with a dash that was remarkable for a team who had just returned from a humiliating defeat.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Tony Larcom, as he stood beside me while I was batting the ball to the various basemen. "Percy Randall is a regular tonic. If the fellows will keep in this form they can beat the earth. Good boy, Percy! That was a dandy," he added, as our new third baseman made a dive towards short stop and captured a hard ground hit with one hand. I nodded in approbation to Ray, who wore a smile of confidence as he stood watching this play from second base.

At the close of our practice, Ray, Tony, and I walked back to the college together.

"Keep it up, boys," said Tony, "and we will see that Crimson Banner yet."

"Yes," answered Ray, with a laugh, "I can see it Wednesday when I go over to Berkeley. It doesn't cost anything to see it, but I fancy we may be able to capture it, too, if we can keep on in the way we have begun to-day. We are still a little unaccustomed to the change, but I think we will soon get used to it. The only thing I could wish for is more time to practice. Our game with Park College comes off next Saturday. That is just a week too soon for me. If we could have six days' more practice, I shouldn't be afraid to tackle the best college nine in the country."

"Oh, it's all right as it is," answered Tony. "We'll be in good condition by Saturday, don't you fear."

"I can tell better about our prospects after I see Wednesday's game," said Ray. "At any rate we will practice twice a day until Thursday, so we ought to be in good trim. Don't forget to be on hand at five o'clock this afternoon," he added as I left him.

It was a pleasant experience to Ray and myself to be walking freely upon the campus again and attending our lectures. We had neither of us lost ground, but were enabled to resume our places without suffering any disadvantage from our period of suspension. This was of course due entirely to the care with which we had attended to our studies while lodging in town; and the knowledge of this did much to conciliate Dr. Drayton, who greeted us both kindly, and even unbent so far as to express his sympathy with us in our defeat — or to put it in his highly dignified way, he "regretted that our efforts in the baseball field had not been so far attended with success."

Professor Fuller I had not seen during Monday or Tuesday, but after visiting the post office Tuesday evening, I determined to take advantage of the next hour's leisure and pay the professor a short call. As I turned from the main street into the lane which led to Professor Fuller's house I heard a light footstep behind me, and turned quickly to see who it was. The sun had only just set, and the light was still sufficient for me to see it was Miss Nettie who was ap-

proaching, probably, like myself, returning from the post office. I stopped and greeted her.

"I am going your way," I said. "May I accompany you?"

She nodded pleasantly.

"Are you going to see the 'Old Governor'?" she asked with a smile.

"Yes," I answered, laughing. "Do you call him by that name, too?"

"I might almost as well," she said frankly. "It seems to suit father so well, and I think he likes it, too. He is at home — at least he was a half hour ago when I left him after supper. It was only this afternoon that we were talking about you and Mr. Wendell and the ball nine. In fact, I haven't talked about anything else for the past two days."

"We were in very hard luck," I said.

"Indeed you were," she said warmly. "I can't get over it. I asked everybody I knew about it, and got all the accounts I could. You know it is very hard for me to get the news, having no brother to tell me, but I made up my mind I would know all about it, and I did. I was sure it couldn't be your fault that the game was lost. I didn't believe anybody could beat our nine. It was too bad about Mr. Harrison ——"

"About Harrison?" I said quickly, wondering who could have told her the whole truth about Fred.

"Yes, about his being taken sick," she answered.

"Oh, yes," I said, somewhat relieved to find that the

actual truth had not reached her. "Yes, it was too bad. It happened just at the wrong time for us."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am," she went on, "for I had counted on our winning that game. I am glad it didn't take place here, for I couldn't have stood the sight of it. I know I should have cried. I always do when I get terribly excited, and I make a perfect sight of myself."

"Well, we appreciate your feelings, anyhow, Miss Nettie," I answered with a laugh, "and I wish we had proved ourselves worthy of your sympathy."

"Oh, you will do better next time, I'm sure; and I think I would rather see you beat Park College than get the championship."

"That is the way I feel," I said; "and if we can beat both Halford and Park Colleges we can still tie for championship, so all hope is not gone yet of reaching the Crimson Banner."

We had now arrived at Professor Fuller's house.

"If you will wait one moment I will see if father is in," said Miss Nettie, hurrying into the house. In a short time she returned.

"I am very sorry," she said. "Father is engaged with some one in the library. The door is closed, and I cannot tell who it is, but from the voice I think it must be one of the students. Won't you wait? He may be at leisure shortly."

"I have some work to do," I answered, "so I'll not wait. My errand was not urgent, so I can call again. I came merely for a brief social visit."

"He will be sorry to miss you, I know," said Miss Nettie, "and you must come again soon."

"I will, thank you," was my response. "Good night, Miss Nettie."

"Good night," she responded; "and tell Mr. Wendell that we are sorry the game came out so badly."

CHAPTER XXIV

A TURN OF LUCK

I HAD not retraced my footsteps far when I heard Professor Fuller's gate open and close. Evidently the caller had taken his departure, and from the manner in which he was following me, I felt confident he must be one of the students. He was walking at about the same pace that I was, keeping some fifty yards behind me. At the entrance to the college grounds I paused long enough for him to come up.

It was Len Howard. He either did not see me, or did not want to notice me, for he was going past me with his head bent toward the ground.

"Hullo, Howard," I said.

He looked up quickly. His face was somewhat pale and worn; his expression grave and thoughtful.

"Hullo, Elder," he answered.

"You were Professor Fuller's visitor, weren't you?"

"Yes; I have just come from there. I am glad I went. The old governor is very kind."

"You haven't been telling him ——"

"No, no," answered Howard, interrupting me. "It was not necessary to tell him everything. It

would only have distressed him, and — and I couldn't have gone all over it again. I went to pay him the money I had borrowed, and which Ray gave me this morning. I then merely told him that I had got foolishly into debt, and asked his advice."

"Have you disposed of those town men?" I inquired.

"Yes, and a terrible load it lifted off my mind. I have done a lot of hard thinking during the past two days, more than I ever did in my life before, and I have made resolutions that I shall never break."

"I am sure of it, Howard," I answered, "and I am very glad you got out of your trouble so well."

"What worries me most," he continued, "is the debt I owe Ray Wendell. As each of my debts is paid I feel this load grow heavier; and while it is a great relief to be rid of these old accounts, I hate to think of all I owe to Ray. I would give anything to be able to pay him promptly, but I don't know what to do. I am in very moderate circumstances, and my debts amount to a large sum."

"Don't let it worry you, Howard," I answered. "I know you will do your best, and so does Ray. Pay him as you feel you can."

"It was about this particularly that I wanted Professor Fuller's advice. I told him I was willing to do almost anything to secure the money I needed, and he made a suggestion which I am going to follow out, and which I hope will bring good results."

"I sincerely hope so," I answered, as we parted.

I was walking toward Colver Hall, thinking over this conversation, and scarcely noticing my surroundings, when my foot suddenly tripped over a large drain pipe which lay on the grass, and which I had not seen on account of the darkness. I was thrown violently to the ground, my right wrist doubling under me in such a way as to give it a severe wrench. It pained me considerably for a few minutes, so on reaching my room I bathed it freely with liniment until the pain subsided. Finding that it gave me little more trouble, and, beyond some slight aching, seemed as strong as usual, I experienced a feeling of relief at having escaped so luckily, and soon ceased thinking about it.

But the next morning my wrist was brought to my attention again. I was alarmed to find that it had swollen during the night, and was stiff and unmanageable. As I could move it only slightly, and then with considerable pain, the idea of using it for my regular exercise in pitching was out of the question. This worried me, so hurrying over to the doctor's the first thing after breakfast, I submitted my wrist to his examination.

The doctor felt of the injured spot carefully.

"Only a slight straining of the muscles and tendons," he said. "It will be all right in a week."

"A week!" I exclaimed. "Why, I must pitch a game of ball this Saturday."

The doctor shook his head.

"Well, you may be able to use it a little by that

time if you rest it until then, but I shouldn't advise you to subject it to such violent exercise. You probably cannot last out a whole game, and you would only strain it worse, so that it would be laid up for several weeks. Now, if you can wait a few days longer, you will have no trouble."

"But I can't," I said in despair; "the game must take place Saturday, and I *must* pitch."

"I wish I could give you more encouragement," said the doctor. "You take considerable risk in trying to pitch a whole game through so soon after injuring it. I can recommend an excellent liniment, and perhaps it may bring you into some sort of shape by Saturday, but I fear not."

I took the doctor's prescription, and went away very much discouraged by his words. What were we to do? The nine had no substitute pitcher, and depended solely upon me. If I found myself unable to play, all the rest would feel the evil effects of the loss, and the result would probably be another defeat — and this time by Park College! Oh, it was too much! I set my teeth, and determined that I would pitch if it broke my arm to do it.

I concluded to say nothing about the matter to any of the other fellows except Ray, knowing that it would only have a discouraging effect upon them; so when twelve o'clock came I went down to the grounds, and occupied myself in coaching the others instead of pitching. This appeared perfectly natural to the rest, for Ray had left on the noon train for

Berkeley to witness the Park-Halford game, and I had always acted as captain in his absence.

At seven o'clock that evening Tony and I went down to the depot, and met Ray and Clinton Edwards on their return from the game. They were talking earnestly as they came towards us, and I fancied that they both wore a hopeful expression of face.

"Who beat?" cried Tony, eager to learn the news.

"Oh, Park College, of course," answered Edwards. "They nearly always do on their own grounds."

"What was the score?" I asked, as we turned back towards the college.

"Five to three," answered Ray.

"Why, that was pretty close. Was it a good game?"

"Yes, fair; and the Park men only won by shouting Halford out of the game. It was one of the meanest games, as far as Park College is concerned, that I ever saw. I honestly believe the Halford men might have beaten on neutral grounds, but the mob made such a racket that they couldn't help making a few errors, and those errors cost them the game."

"Then the teams were evenly matched?"

"Very, and for a while it was simply a toss up as to which would win. Boys, Halford has a pretty good nine this year."

"How about Park?"

"Not so good as usual — in most respects not a bit better than the Halford team. If we can beat one of them we can beat the other."

"And what do you think of our chances now?" I asked anxiously.

"Extremely good. I don't think either of those nines are as good as the team that we can put in the field Saturday."

Saturday! I had almost forgotten about my wrist, and the word suddenly brought back the recollection of my misfortune. I was reluctant to cast any cloud over the hopeful spirits of my companions, but I knew it had to come; so as soon as we reached Ray's room I told him what had happened. I tried not to exaggerate it, and repeated the doctor's very words, that they might know exactly what to expect. Their faces grew very serious at once. Ray examined my wrist anxiously, then bit his lip with annoyance.

"Well, in all my life," he exclaimed, "I never ran up against such a succession of unlucky circumstances. It certainly seems as if everything was conspiring to destroy our chances."

I tried to be as hopeful as possible.

"Perhaps it may improve in a day or so. I intend to exercise it, gently at first, and then harder, so as to limber it up. I tell you one thing, boys, I am going to play under any circumstances. All I fear is that my wrist will be weak and injure my work."

"Can't we have the game postponed?" asked Tony.

"Certainly not," answered Ray. "The Park men would never consent to it. If they got any wind of the truth they would insist on having the game, and

one disabled man is not a sufficient excuse for postponement. They would simply laugh at us for proposing such a thing."

"Then I am going to pray for rain," said Tony so solemnly that we could not help laughing.

"Well, Harry, we must make the best of it," said Ray. "Use your liniment and exercise your wrist as much as you can without hurting it. It may come out better than we think. I will get Raymond, the Freshman pitcher, out to-morrow, so as to have him ready and in some sort of condition by Saturday. Do the other fellows know about it?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, they might better know to-morrow than later," said Ray. "It would only discourage them to tell them at the last moment. We must make up our minds to accept the circumstances, and make as good a fight as we can."

During the next two days my wrist improved perceptibly, but far too slowly for our plans; and as Friday night approached, I was compelled to face the fact that I would be able to pitch but a very weak game the next day.

Thursday and Friday had been days of anxiety and suspense to me, constantly alternating, as I was, between hope and discouragement; and when Friday evening came, and I found my wrist still stiff and weak, I was almost ready to cry with vexation. To Ray's inquiries I made as encouraging responses as possible; but while I spoke of pitching the next day,

I knew in my heart that my efforts would prove scarcely more than a dead weight on the rest of the team, and I feared the results would only be disastrous. My hopes of our winning the championship, or of even making a respectable record, seemed to have taken their departure; and it was with sadly depressed spirits that I went to bed Friday evening, and tried to get the long night's rest which was needed to refresh us for the next day's struggle.

From a heavy dreamless sleep I was suddenly awakened by the sound of someone hammering upon my door. I sat up in a dazed state, wondering who could be disturbing me at such an hour. My curtains were drawn, and I had no means of knowing what time it was, but I seemed to have slept but a short while, and I fancied it could scarcely be more than midnight. Meanwhile the hammering grew more vociferous, and I heard a voice, which seemed familiar, shouting outside:

"Harry; Harry Elder! Get up and come here quick! I've got great news for you."

I sprang out of bed and hurried to the door. There in the hall stood Tony Larcom, waving an umbrella excitedly over his head. From the window in the entry the murky light of a cloudy day struggled in.

"What is the matter?" I asked in amazement, laughing at the ridiculous sight he presented.

"Matter, my boy! Everything's the matter! I was up at daybreak, and hurried into my clothes to

run over here and tell you the good news. We are saved — we are saved, old fellow!"

"Saved? Why, what do you mean?" I exclaimed, still more mystified.

"Rain! rain!" he shouted, waving his umbrella again. "Our luck has turned. It is raining pitchforks! No game to-day."

I rushed to the window, hardly daring to believe his words. One glance was enough, and then I gave a whoop of joy. The sky was darkly overcast, and the rain was falling softly but steadily — not in a shower, that might pass away in a few hours, but with the heavy, businesslike downpour of a regular easterly storm.

"Didn't I say that I was going to pray for rain?" said Tony complacently, taking the credit of it all to himself.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SECOND GAME

CERTAINLY, as Tony said, our luck had turned. As the morning advanced, the rain continued to fall, so the question of playing ball was practically settled. About ten o'clock Tony telegraphed to the secretary of the Park nine, "Raining hard. Shall we come?" Within an hour he received the following answer from Berkeley, "Impossible to play. Game will have to be postponed. Will write you later."

Mutual congratulations followed. The fellows were all delighted, and at noon a jubilant, happy crowd assembled in Ray's room to discuss the matter.

"Nothing could have pleased me better," said Ray. "For the first time in my life I am glad to see it rain on a baseball day. It gives Harry time to cure his wrist, and the rest of us several days more of practice. It is just what we most needed."

"Pour away, old boy!" exclaimed Tony, as a sudden gust of wind brought the rain swirling against the window panes. "You have done the square thing by us to-day. I'll never complain of the weather again — never. Say, Ray, what new date had we better arrange for the game?"

"I was just thinking of that," answered Ray. "We can't get a day off in the middle of the week. The faculty don't want us to go away except on Saturdays."

"Suppose we appoint the Monday following the Halford game," I said. "The faculty might object to our going away twice. Now, as the Halford game takes place next Saturday, we might stay at Halford over Sunday, and play the Park men Monday afternoon, on our way back. In that way we can do it all up in one trip, and be back here Monday night."

"A very good idea," answered Ray, "and if the Park men are agreeable, we had better fix it that way by all means."

The consent of our faculty to this scheme was easily obtained, and the correspondence which Tony held with the Park men resulted in their acceptance of the arrangement, so the game was appointed to take place on the Monday following our trip to Halford.

The marked improvement in uniformity and excellence of play on the part of our nine during the next week confirmed Ray's statement that all we needed to perfect ourselves was a few days' more practice. My wrist give me little trouble in the early part of the week, so Wednesday morning I made the experiment of pitching a whole practice game through and found that I suffered nothing in consequence. Thursday and Friday, therefore, I took my regular practice with the others, and in proportion as my wrist recovered strength I recovered confidence. During

these last two days I do not think any one would have known that I had suffered any injury. My enforced rest seemed, if anything, to have done me good, for Friday I certainly felt more in the spirit of the game, and pitched more effectively, than I had done before I hurt my wrist.

"You needn't come down this afternoon, fellows," said Ray, as we left the grounds at one o'clock. "Keep quiet and remember to go to bed early to-night."

We had arranged to leave the next morning on the 9:30 train, but I was up by seven o'clock anxious to know what the weather had in store for us. To my delight, I found on opening my curtains that fortune again favored us, this time with bright sunshine and an almost cloudless sky.

"It may be hot," I thought, "but still what of that. so long as it doesn't rain."

At the depot I found a large and interested crowd of students who had assembled, as was their custom, to see us off. The nine were all there, cheerful and in good spirits, Tony Larcom rushing around like a chicken with its head off, buying our tickets, checking our luggage, and answering all sorts of questions at the same time.

"At last!" he exclaimed as he caught sight of me, and stopped a moment to mop the perspiration from his face. "I was afraid you were goirg to be late. Got your valise? Here give it to me, I'll get it checked. Jim; Jim! come here and get this valise.

Hullo, Jim! Where in thunder is that fellow? — oh there you are — get this checked right away and have it ready with the other things. Cæsar's ghost! but isn't it hot? Yes, Frank I'll telegraph the score immediately after the game, don't you fear. Here, you fellows, get out of my way — how do you expect me to do anything with a dozen or more crowding and jamming ——" and off he rushed while I joined the other members of the nine.

In a few moments the train arrived and we quickly clambered aboard, Tony making sure that we were all there before he ascended the platform. Then, as the train moved off, Tony waved his hat, while the crowd at the station gave three rousing cheers, and with this encouraging sound ringing in our ears, we set off for Halford.

We expected to arrive there about eleven o'clock, for Halford was not many miles beyond Berkeley. Ray took advantage of this opportunity to say a few final words of caution. During the week he had frequently mentioned several points of weakness in the Halford nine, and given us directions as to the best manner of taking advantage of them. One point in particular he had brought out strong, and this he reiterated now.

"Remember," he said, "the Halford men chiefly lack nerve at critical junctures. They are apt to go to pieces if pushed hard. They will play a strong game while they are in the lead, and while they can keep the bases clear; but heavy batting will demoralize

them, and I think we can easily manage their pitcher. We must try to fill the bases. We must hit the ball *every time.* Don't try to make home runs all the time, but *hit the ball,* and run bases daringly. Take every possible chance. We may lose one or two points by so doing, but we will gain in the end, for it will demoralize them, I know."

When we arrived at Halford we found Slade and Bennett, the secretary and captain of their nine, awaiting us. The feeling between Halford and Belmont Colleges had always been extremely friendly, and kept up by succeeding generations with as much respect for the tradition as had our bitter animosity for Park College. Our reception, therefore, was of the pleasantest nature possible.

"Very sorry to hear of your hard luck over at Dean," said Slade, as he shook hands with Ray and me.

"Yes, it was too bad," answered Ray, "but you have had your share of misfortune too — last Wednesday, I mean. I think you should have had that game."

"Well, so do we," said Bennett, "but what could we expect, playing as we did on their ground? We had to play the nine and the whole crowd too. I fear you will get your dose of it on Monday."

"I suppose so," answered Ray.

Halford had received a donation from a wealthy graduate of money enough to lay out new grounds and construct a new and large grand stand. As we

entered the gate in our carriages after dinner, the sight that met our eyes was enough to gladden the heart of any baseball enthusiast.

The new diamond was as level as a billiard table, and covered with fresh, green, closely cropped grass, while the grand stand was gaily decorated with flags, and filled with a chattering and laughing crowd of people.

"Great Scott," exclaimed Percy Randall, "just look at that outfield, boys! There isn't a blade of grass on it, and it is as smooth and hard as a board. If we knock a hard ball outside of the diamond it will roll into the middle of next week."

"That's just what we want to do, fellows," answered Ray promptly. "Hit low and hard, and the ball won't stop this side of the fence. Remember now for the last time, fellows: don't hit up in the air — hit hard and low, and run your bases like tigers."

We were accorded the compliment of a round burst of applause, as the Halford men came in from their practice, and we ran out on the field. This put us in the best of spirits, and we set to work picking up the balls, catching them on the fly, and throwing them from base to base with a brilliancy and dash that elicted frequent acknowledgment from the grand stand. We had only ten minutes for our preliminary exercise; then the signal sounded, and the game was called.

Now that fortune had turned, it persisted in our favor, for we won the toss, and chose the field. Full

of confidence we ran to our various positions, and their first batter took his place.

Not being quite warmed to work yet, I made the mistake of placing the first ball directly over the plate. The batter caught it about the center of his bat, and sent it away out to center field. It had not occurred to us in our calculations that the outfield might prove as advantageous to our opponents as to ourselves in case they hit hard; but this was brought forcibly to my mind, for, before the ball was captured on the ground by Lewis Page, the batter reached second base. This was greeted by a round of applause, but nothing daunted, we settled down to work, and put out the next man in short order.

Then came a hard ground hit to George Ives, who threw the batter out at first base, but this enabled the first batter to reach third. Then a safe hit was made just over Ray Wendell's head, and the runner on third base scored. The next man I succeeded in striking out, and we took the bat.

George Ives opened with a good safe hit, and according to Ray Wendell's direction, he dashed down to second base at the first ball pitched. The catcher hardly expected this, threw over the second baseman's head, and George reached third. The next two, Percy Randall and myself, were thrown out at first base, and it looked almost as if George Ives would be left on third, but Holland saved us from this by hitting safe and bringing George home. We made no more runs, and the inning closed with the score 1 — 1.

In the second inning neither scored. In the third inning Halford made one run, while we were blanked. But in the fourth inning we returned the compliment by making a run and blanking them. In the fifth inning they made one more run, making the score 3 — 2 in their favor. In the sixth and seventh innings they kept this lead, and prevented us from scoring.

In spite of their being ahead, we had felt no anxiety, for we were sure of our superiority both in the field and at the bat, and we believed that our time would come. It was only at the end of the seventh inning that we felt the least uneasy.

"Boys," said Ray, "this won't do. We are nearing the end of the game, and they are still in the lead. We must break this up. You see, it is just as I told you: they play a fine game while they keep the bases clean. We haven't pushed them hard enough. We must set the ball rolling. Start her off, Alfred."

His last words were addressed to Burnett, who was first at the bat in the ending of the eighth inning. But Alfred evidently did not see his way clear, for he struck out.

"Oh, pshaw, let me show you," cried Percy Randall cheerfully, as he took his position.

Percy was as good as his word, and at the second ball pitched, placed it nicely over the short stop's head, reaching first base in safety. This was Percy's first chance and we immediately learned his value. He followed Ray's instructions by performing two suc-

cessive feats of reckless base running such as I had never in my life seen before.

At the very first ball he was off for second base. The catcher threw straight and true, but Percy hurled himself forward head first, and slid into the base safely. Hastily picking himself up and without stopping to dust himself off, he started off at the next ball, and dashed for third base. Again the catcher threw straight, but, by another brilliant slide, Percy reached third.

This took the Halford men by storm. They had never seen anything quite like Percy's impudence, and the success of it staggered them. I was at the bat and waiting for a good ball, but the pitcher disconcerted by Percy's feat, gave me my base on balls. At the next ball I ran down to second, the catcher not daring to throw it down for fear of letting Percy in home. Holland, who was at the bat, noticed that the pitcher was unsettled, and coolly waited for two strikes to be called. The pitcher continued to throw wild, and, as a result, Holland was given his base on balls.

This left us with a runner on each base, and only one man out. Ray Wendell then came to the bat and looked calmly at the situation.

"Now, Ray," I said to myself, "you told *us* what to do. Now show us *how*. Practice what you've preached, my boy, and the day is saved."

Ray planted himself firmly, and waited for a good ball. The pitcher, knowing well that if he gave Ray

also his base on balls, it would force us all around, and bring Percy home, was careful to put the ball straight over the plate.

"One strike," called the umpire.

The pitcher hurled another ball almost exactly in the same spot.

"Hit it! Hit it!" I exclaimed in a whisper.

Ray's bat flashed in the air. Crack! came a report that sounded over the whole field. The ball shot over my head like lightning, about ten feet above the ground, landing safely between left and center field, and rolled on — on — on, while the two fielders ran desperately after it, and Percy, I, Holland, and lastly, Ray himself, dashed around in home, *making four runs in all.*

We were wild with joy, the other fellows receiving us with open arms. The grand stand greeted the play with some applause, and, considering the loss it brought to their friends in the field, we appreciated greatly their generosity. Ray's hit was a long and hard one, and he could almost have walked around before the fielders reached the ball.

"Go around again, Ray!" shouted Tony, entirely forgetting the dignity of his position as our scorer, in the delight of the moment.

We made no more runs that inning, the Halford men settling down bravely to steady playing as they found the bases clear again. The game was practically settled, however, for the score was now 6 — 3 in our favor.

Confidently we took the field for the ninth inning, and played a strong, sure game which resulted in our closing the Halford men out without a run. With evident signs of disappointment the large crowd dispersed, and we found ourselves a jolly set of victors. We gathered together and gave three cheers for the Halford men, which were responded to by a similar compliment from their nine, and then hurried to our carriages. Laughing, shouting, and joking, we scrambled in.

"There!" cried Percy, as he tumbled in a heap over me. "Who says we can't play ball?"

The driver wheeled his team about and we were off for our hotel.

"And now, boys," said Ray, his face glowing with excitement and pleasure—"Now for Park College, and the Crimson Banner!"

CHAPTER XXVI

GENEROUS HOSTS

An hour later and a jubilant, noisy crowd of students were seated about one of the large tables in the dining room of the Halford House, all bent upon doing justice to the best dinner that the modest hostelry could supply. The party lacked only one thing to complete its happiness — the presence of Tony Larcom.

"Where is Tony?" I asked.

"Gone to the telegraph office," answered Ray. "He has about a dozen messages to send to Belmont. He will be back shortly."

Ray had hardly ceased speaking when Tony entered. A round of cheers greated him.

"Any news from Belmont?" we cried.

"Well, scarcely," he answered, with a laugh as he seated himself. "I've just sent my telegrams. But I have news from the game over at Dean to-day."

"I suppose, of course the Park men beat Dean all to pieces," said Ray. "What was the score?"

"Twelve to four in favor of Park," answered Tony. "That is somewhat different from our score with the Dean men."

"Yes," I answered, "but it is not so different from what our score *ought* to have been, and *would* have been had we played them to-day. We were badly handicapped."

"And so were the Park men, it seems — at least for part of the game," said Tony.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Ray, looking quickly at Tony.

"My telegram said that Arnold was unwell, and did not pitch after the fourth inning."

All conversation ceased in an instant. Arnold was by all odds the most skilful pitcher in the Berkshire League; and his record for the past two years had never been equaled in the history of the colleges. He was a tower of strength to the Park nine, and had won several notable victories for them by his masterly handling of the ball. Park College owed her success in baseball chiefly to Arnold's steady nerve, good judgment, and skilful playing. He was not the captain of the nine, for, although the position had been offered him, he had declined in favor of Beard, the third baseman, on the ground that his work in the pitcher's box would require all his attention; but he was really the controlling authority of the nine — the power behind the throne, so to speak.

The news Tony brought was therefore of the deepest interest to us, who recognized in Arnold our most formidable opponent. The same idea was undoubtedly in all our minds.

"Arnold unwell!" I exclaimed, giving utterance

to the common thought. "I wonder if he will be able to play Monday."

"That I can't say," answered Tony. "The telegram was very brief, and gave me no clue as to the nature or extent of his sickness."

"Suppose Arnold doesn't pitch Monday," said Percy Randall. "Oh, my! Won't we have a picnic!"

"Well, you needn't count on that at all," answered Ray. "You will only be the loser for it. I know Park College of old, and I don't take any stock in their 'invalids.' Two years ago we heard rumors from Berkeley some time before that three of their men were laid up. All the same, the next week out came those three 'invalids,' and played a rattling fine game, doing us up to the tune of 6 — 4. You remember that, Harry?"

"Indeed I do," I responded, "for one of those 'invalids' knocked a home run on an outcurve of mine. Park College 'invalids' are dangerous men on the ball field."

"Well," said Tony, "I know their tricks, too, so I didn't place much faith in that part of the message. There is little doubt but that Arnold will be on hand Monday, and keep up his record."

As we left the dining room we were met in the hallway by Slade and Bennett, of the Halford nine. It was the first we had seen of them since the game. They were both as pleasant as possible, and evidently determined to let their disappointment over the results

of the game in no way affect their behavior toward us.

"Well," said Slade to me with a smile, "you deserve to be congratulated, for you played a strong game. We honestly thought we would win to-day, for we calculated on finding your nine weaker than usual. It was your game with the Dean men that made us feel so confident, and the results to-day took us pretty well by surprise. The fellows feel disappointed, of course, for it throws us entirely out of the race, but the game was fairly won, so there's an end of it."

"Our nine has greatly improved since the Dean game," said Ray. "We have made several changes."

"I should think so," answered Bennett; "you played finely this afternoon, and I don't think you have ever put a stronger nine on the field. I don't feel ashamed of the defeat at all, for it was a mighty well fought game on both sides."

"You gave us very generous treatment," said Ray, "and we shall always remember it gratefully."

"It was only a return of the courtesy we have always received at Belmont," answered Slade. "We simply gave you a fair show. Everybody ought to have that. If we had received it at Berkeley, we might have been more successful. By the way, I suppose you have heard the news from Dean?"

"Yes," said Ray. "It was only what I expected. Did you receive any word concerning Arnold?"

"No. What about him?"

"Our telegram stated he was unwell, and gave up pitching in the fourth inning."

"It couldn't be of any importance," rejoined Slade, "for the message I received said nothing about it. Did he leave the field?"

"No," answered Tony. "My telegram reads, 'Arnold unwell in fourth inning — changed places with Cross.' Cross, you know, is their substitute pitcher, and plays right field."

"Then of course it doesn't amount to much," said Bennett. "The game was no doubt virtually won in the first four innings, and so Arnold changed positions in order to avoid all chances of straining his arm."

"I suppose he was bent on taking things as easily as possible, and saving up his strength for you next Monday," added Slade with a smile.

"That is more like the real truth of the matter," answered Ray. "Arnold no doubt felt confident of the Dean game, and didn't want to overwork himself. I told the fellows not to put any faith in rumors of sickness."

"What were you thinking of doing this evening?" asked Slade, looking at his watch, and changing the subject.

"Nothing in particular," answered Ray.

"Well, our dramatic club gives an amateur performance in the college hall, and I came over here especially to invite you all to attend. Of course it doesn't amount to much as a dramatic treat, but we always have lots of fun. What do you say?"

A chorus of assent greeted this proposition.

"Come on then," said Slade. "I have complimentary tickets for the whole crowd. The performance begins at eight o'clock, so there is no time to lose."

As we were going out one of the hallboys brought Tony Larcom a telegram. Tony opened it, glanced over its contents, and then, with a laugh, handed it to me.

The telegram was from Clinton Edwards, and ran as follows:

News just received. Hurrah for Belmont! Let the good work go on. I will meet you at Berkeley on Monday and bring the "baseball chorus" with me to yell for the champions.

"What is the 'baseball chorus'?" asked Percy Randall, as the telegram passed from one to another.

"Oh, it's a gang of about forty fellows that Clinton has organized with a view to making the utmost noise possible," answered Tony. "He had them over at Dean to cheer for us, but we didn't give them a chance that day. We'll give them something more to do Monday, and we can trust Clinton for all the support and encouragement we need. I would back his little band against a whole grand stand full of Park men. If cheering is to decide that game, we will stand a chance to win."

The dramatic entertainment was highly enjoyable, and in every respect a success. The actors acquitted themselves with the utmost credit; and the many col-

lege gags and local hits that were interspersed throughout the play gave much additional zest and enjoyment to the performance, and kept the spectators in an almost continual roar of laughter. Occasional responses from the audience, and impromptu rallies of wit between the actors and some of their friends in front, formed a novel and amusing feature.

Immediately after the play an informal reception took place, in which we were the center of interest, and received every possible attention and courtesy. The gentlemanly behavior on the part of the Halford men was most highly appreciated by us, for it was quite evident that they had fully expected to win the game, and prepared the evening's entertainment with a view to celebrating the victory. The fair and generous treatment we had received on the ball ground, and the graceful manner with which they took their defeat, aroused in us the sincerest feelings of gratitude, and greatly strengthened the traditional feeling of friendship that existed between Belmont and Halford.

And their attentions were unremitting during our brief visit of two days.

"We will try to repay you for your kindness, when you come over to Belmont next year," I said to Slade.

"And we will try to acknowledge the compliment by beating you, as you did us this year," laughed Slade.

"If you want to do us a real favor," said Bennett, "beat Park College Monday. They have had that

banner entirely too long, and I'd give a good deal to see you win it."

"What do you think of our chances?" asked Ray.

"Good; that is, if you play the game you did with us. Both Slade and I are going over to Berkeley Monday afternoon, and we'll lend our voices to cheer you on."

With such encouragement and good wishes we left Halford early Monday morning.

"Do you know," said Tony Larcom, as our train moved away from Halford, "those fellows have treated us so nicely, that I feel half ashamed of having beaten them?"

"Well, it does seem a poor sort of return for their kindness," said Dick Palmer; "and yet if we had lost the game I do not think that all their attention could have quite reconciled me to it. We'll strike a marked contrast at Berkeley."

"Yes; I don't think that the Park men will embarrass us with their attentions," remarked Ray dryly.

CHAPTER XXVII

OUR RECEPTION AT BERKELEY

WHATEVER shadow of doubt may have remained in our minds concerning Arnold, was speedily dissipated on our arrival at Berkeley. No one came to meet us at the depot; but when we reached the Wyman Hotel, we found Arnold and Beard awaiting us there.

"How are you, Mr. Arnold?" said Ray, greeting him. "I received word that you were unwell."

"I unwell? Who said so?" asked Arnold.

"The telegram from Dean brought us that report," answered Ray.

"Oh, I understand now what you mean. I was well enough, but I didn't feel like pitching the whole game through, so I changed places with Cross and took a rest."

This answer as well as the tone in which he spoke indicated clearly enough that Arnold had been merely saving himself for Monday's game.

"Are all your men here?" asked Beard.

"Yes," answered Ray.

"Then we shall look for you at the grounds shortly before two o'clock," said Beard, as if about to take his leave.

"One moment," said Tony; "the ball grounds are some distance away. Have any arrangements been made for carriages to take us out?"

"The hotel has its regular omnibus. If you speak to the clerk at the desk I think you will find it has been held awaiting your orders," said Beard. He and Arnold then walked coolly away.

It had always been the custom at Belmont, as well as at Halford, for the home team to supply the visiting players with carriage accommodation. We had hardly looked for this attention from the Park men, but Beard's tone of indifference was exasperating nevertheless. Tony could not repress a half audible exclamation of annoyance as he hurried off to make the necessary arrangements.

After our lunch we met in one of the hotel parlors and held a short, informal meeting.

"Now, boys," began Ray, "I haven't much to add to what I've said many times before, but I want to repeat one or two things. You know I told you that there was no particular point of weakness in the Park nine of which we could take advantage. They have an all round good team, and we must strain every nerve to win. I firmly believe we can do it, but we must play right up to the mark all the time. We must play for every point as if it were the deciding point of the game; we must meet them, therefore, on their own ground, and not yield an inch. We must push our chances hard, and keep up an aggressive policy ourselves. Their strong point is Arnold. If we can hit

his pitching good and hard, and all the time, we will make out all right. I am confident we can, but we must be careful when at the bat, for he is an excellent pitcher, and if any of us display any weakness he will be sure to detect it and take advantage of it. As I told you Saturday, hit hard and low."

While we were still discussing the game, Tony put his head into the room.

"Hurry on with your suits," he said. "The omnibus will be at the door in about fifteen minutes."

We were soon ready to start.

"I wonder what is the matter with Clinton Edwards," said Tony, looking at his watch. "He should have been here before this."

"We must have Clinton and his gang to support us," said Dick Palmer. "It would take some of the starch out of me to be victimized by a grand stand full of Park men, and not have a single backer."

"Oh, I'll make all the noise you want if it becomes necessary," said Tony. He looked somewhat uneasy, however, and whispered to me, "I hope Clinton hasn't missed the train. His backing would do us a world of good."

The omnibus now drew up to the piazza where we were standing. We waited a long time, but Clinton Edwards and his companions failed to put in an appearance, so we were compelled to drive off without them.

"The loss is all their own," said Ray cheerfully.

"They will miss seeing us win a fine game, that is all."

In baseball there is a considerable moral influence in being well backed by friends. We had expected warm support from Clinton Edwards and his crowd, and the sudden blotting out of this expectation could not but react somewhat upon our spirits. It did not, of course, discourage us, for as Percy Randall put it, "We were not afraid of the biggest mob Park College could get together," but it affected our feelings notwithstanding.

"Listen to that!" exclaimed Tony, as we neared the field and heard the sounds of cheering. "The crowd clamors for our blood."

"Well, they will get it — and boiling hot, too," said Percy Randall. "If anything, it rather braces me to tackle this mob all alone."

"Come, fellows," said Ray, as we drove into the grounds. "Step out lively now, and show the stuff that's in you."

We descended from the omnibus, and in a compact group, approached the grand stand amidst an almost perfect silence on the part of the spectators. The Park men were already on the diamond, and practising with a vim that betokened a determined and confident spirit.

I had half hoped to find Clinton Edwards and his party on the field, thinking that they might perhaps have gone directly there from the depot. Not a Belmont man was to be seen, however, so I resigned all

hope of backers, and made up my mind that we must fight the battle alone.

We remained seated on a bench at the side of the field, until Ray, who was standing near the home plate in conversation with Beard, turned and beckoned to us. The Park players were leaving the field, and it was our turn to practise.

Throwing off our coats, we ran out, and set to work in fine shape. That the crowd was watching us was quite evident from a number of ill mannered remarks that I could overhear from my place near the backstop; but, beyond this, the spectators showed no appreciation of our efforts whatever.

"All things considered, if we can play well enough to keep their mouths shut I shall be satisfied," I said to Dick Palmer.

At this moment Ray left Beard, and came quickly toward us.

"We are in luck to start with," he said. "We have won the toss."

A few minutes later the umpire came upon the field, carrying in his hand the new ball with which the game was to be played.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Ray.

"Then get your men in position."

We took our places, and the ball was tossed to me. No batter had stepped up, so I looked inquiringly toward the bench where the Park men were seated. Then, as Arnold, their first batter, rose and picked up

his bat, a student stepped out in front of the grand stand, and waving his cane, cried, "I propose three cheers for the nine. Now, fellows, give it to them."

A roar of cheers burst from the crowd.

"Another one," cried the leader, and again came the cheers.

"One more round," and a third time the crowd responded.

This evidently had been expected by the Park nine, for Arnold stood as if awaiting it; and it was quite as evident to me that it was simply the beginning of a concerted action on the part of the crowd to demoralize us by shouting.

Before the sound had died away we heard another cheer far away outside the field. We looked at one another in surprise. Was it an echo? No, for again it sounded, and this time nearer and clearer. Suddenly the truth flashed upon me. I turned quickly toward the entrance to the grounds. There was a thick cloud of dust in the road outside, and a rumble of heavy wheels; then the carriage gates burst open, and into the field rolled three large omnibuses gayly decked out with the beautiful blue banners of Belmont. Down the smooth roadway that skirted the diamond cantered the teams, while from the omnibuses burst roar after roar of cheers.

As the vehicles took up a position on the opposite side of the field from the mass of the Park crowd, the well known form of Clinton Edwards emerged

from the inside of one of the omnibuses. Climbing on top, he shouted, "Now, boys, blow on your lungs."

A terrific roar ensued. Then, having vindicated himself, Clinton Edwards sat down, and awaited the opening of the game. This novel response to the grand stand had a telling and dramatic effect. The crowd could scarcely have been more surprised had a bombshell fallen in front of them. For a moment they were completely staggered, and the whole effect of their cheering was destroyed.

Whether Clinton Edwards had premeditated the surprise or not, his entrance could not have been more timely. Its effect upon us was magnetic, and our spirits rose mightily as the old familiar Belmont cheer rang out. Ray Wendell waved his hand to Clinton Edwards, while I, seeing that Arnold had taken his place at the home plate, grasped the ball, and made ready.

"Play!" cried the umpire, and the game began.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE THIRD GAME

I PLACED the ball over the inner corner of the base, Arnold struck it good and hard, and sent it flying along the ground toward third base. Quick as a flash Percy Randall picked it up and threw it to first.

"Batter out," cried the umpire, and the three omnibuses again became noisy. Two more men were easily disposed of, and we closed our opponents out without a run.

Thus far the fun had been all our own, while the grand stand had kept silence. Immediately on leaving the field to take our innings, several of us ran over to the omnibuses to greet our friends.

"Why were you so late?" I called to Clinton Edwards.

"We drove all the way over — didn't come by rail, for we knew we couldn't hire omnibuses in this hole of a town. We didn't start early enough, and I was afraid we were going to miss part of the game. It's all right now, so go in and win. We are 'wid yez.'"

We failed, however, to make a run in our half of the first inning, three of our men, in succession, succumbing to the skilful pitching of Arnold. This gave

the grand stand a chance, and they responded with a will. They had recovered from their first surprise by this time, and settled down to their original plan of shouting us into demoralization. It was a vain task, however, with those noisy omnibuses opposite. Clinton Edward's party paid them back in their own coin every time, and the effect upon us was proportionately inspiring.

No runs were made on either side in the second inning. In the third inning their first batter secured a hit, the first one of the game, and reached his base amid howls from the grand stand. He reached second through a bad throw of Dick Palmer's. The next batter then struck a pop fly up in the air just over short-stop. George Ives stood waiting for it, when the runner from second base ran full tilt into him, upsetting him and reaching third base while the ball fell to the ground.

We claimed a foul, but the runner declared that Ives was directly in his path, where he had no business to be, and the umpire decided against him. George may have been in the runner's path, but it was plainly a trick, for no runner would have attempted to run from second under such circumstances except with the intention of knocking George down, as he could only in that way gain third base.

Immediately a warm discussion took place in which the runner became so actively engaged that he thoughtlessly left his base, and stood several feet off. Percy

Randall noticing this, and having picked up the ball unobserved by the others, called out,

"Mr. Umpire, have you called time?"

"No," was the response.

"Then how is that?" asked Percy, quickly touching the runner with the ball.

"The runner is out?" said the umpire beckoning to him to come in.

Chagrined and mortified, the runner walked sullkily in. The Park men were badly upset by this clever dodge, for they felt confident of securing a run, there being no men out, and a man on third. They did not regain their lost advantage, and we closed the inning with the score still blank.

From that time on the crowd selected Percy Randall for their special attention, and sought in every way to disconcert him. They had picked out the wrong man, however. Percy played away as unconcernedly as if he heard nothing, and if anything with more than his usual dash and brilliancy. He was the first man at the bat in the fourth inning, and the second ball pitched struck him on the arm. He was of course given his base.

"Now is your chance, Percy," said Ray. "Get away to second at once. There are no men out."

Percy was off like the wind, and reached second base in safety by one of his phenomenal slides, which of course brought the voices of Clinton Edwards' chorus into vigorous play.

I came next to the bat. We had thus far been un-

able to do anything with Arnold, who was pitching in magnificent form, and we were beginning to fear we never could handle him. I watched my chances carefully, and succeeded in driving a hard ball to the short stop. Percy Randall purposely made a start toward third, and the short stop, on picking up the ball, turned to keep him at second. In this way he lost several seconds — time enough to allow me to reach first base. Then Ray came to the bat.

"If he will repeat his exploit of Saturday, we will have a great lead," I thought.

At the first ball Ray struck hard, driving it well up into the air and out between left and center field. It was an easy fly to catch, and I fully expected to see the fielder capture it, so I did not start off very fast. To my surprise, however, the fielder had not run ten steps when his foot slipped, and down he tumbled, the ball alighting on the ground some distance behind him. A loud exclamation of disappointment escaped the crowd, while Percy and I dashed around the bases; and before the fielder could pick himself up and get the ball, both of us scored, and Ray stood on third base.

Our friends went wild with joy, while the Park men were glum and silent. Before the inning closed, Ray reached home on a sacrifice hit of Frank Holland's to right field, and the score stood 3 — 0 in our favor. The Park men then bent every nerve to the task of tying the score.

Foes though they were, I gave them the credit of

playing a splendid up hill game. In the sixth inning they secured one run, and in the eighth inning another, making the score 3 — 2. During these innings Arnold's work had been exceptionally fine, and we had been unable to make more than two or three safe hits.

"I'm afraid Arnold is almost too much for us today," said Ray to me. "Our hope lies chiefly in holding the lead. If we can do so for one more inning, the game is ours."

We went into the field for the ninth inning with the determination to do or die. The first batter was promptly put out by a ground hit which Ray captured neatly, in spite of the disconcerting howls from the grand stand. As the excitement had increased during the latter part of the game, the behavior of the Park men had of course grown more riotous. In every way they had tried to put us out by their noise, but our attention was so absorbed in our work that it had scarcely affected us.

The second batter in this last inning reached first on a safe hit, and was followed by Arnold, who, from the scowl he wore, seemed bent on knocking the cover off the ball. I was sorry to see him at the bat at such a moment, for he was a strong batter, and I was pretty well tired out by my hard work of the afternoon and Saturday. Several balls were called, and I was compelled to send one directly over the plate. Arnold saw his chance and took it.

With a sharp crack he sent the ball away out toward

right field, and reached second base in safety, sending the former runner to third. This made two men out, with runners on second and third bases.

Beard then came to the bat. From the care with which he settled himself, one could see he appreciated the gravity of the situation. If he succeeded in making a heavy hit, the chances were that he could bring in two runs.

At the second ball he struck wildly; and, more by chance than good judgment, drove it well up into the air toward center field. We all looked after it with anxious eyes.

"Take it, Page!" cried Ray, as he saw both Lewis Page and Alfred Barnett run for it. Arnold and the other runner ran around toward the home plate. The fate of the game, therefore, rested on Lewis Page, who now stood well under the ball, his hands up, ready to receive it. We watched its descent in breathless suspense. Downward it shot like a swallow. Lewis Page's hands closed quickly about it.

"Striker out," called the umpire, and the game was over.

Immediately the field was a scene of wild confusion. In a mass, Clinton Edward's band of followers, who had been with difficulty suppressing their excitement, charged across the roadway, shouting and cheering. Seizing hold of us, they hugged and tore us half to pieces in their joy.

"Boys, it was glorious," croaked Clinton, in a hoarse voice scarcely above a whisper. "I wouldn't have

missed it for the world. The Crimson Banner will soon be ours;" and off he went again into a wild fit of ecstasy, clasping the man who happened to be nearest to him.

Among those pressing around to congratulate Ray I was interested in seeing Len Howard. I had not noticed him in any of the omnibuses, but he seemed to be one of the most enthusiastic. The fellows were eager to carry us off with them, but Ray objected.

"No," he said. "We have our omnibus, and we must return to the hotel, for I have to see Beard by agreement after the game."

"Do you intend driving back to Belmont?" I asked Clinton.

"Certainly," he answered.

"Then, if you expect to get there before we do, you will have to start soon, for we go by train."

"You don't return till after dinner?"

"No," I answered.

"Then we will have time. We want to get back before you, so as to prepare the boys. We must have a bonfire to-night."

As soon as some measure of order could be restored Clinton got his crowd together into the omnibuses; and after a farewell round of cheers, they took their leave, while we drove back to the hotel. The rest of the spectators had dispersed in angry silence.

"Well, talk about luck!" exclaimed Tony, as he came into the room where we were changing our suits

and packing our things. "How was that for a close shave?"

"Entirely too close," answered Ray. "We climbed through a pretty small hole to-day. One or two more innings, and they might have got away with us. We won by pure luck, and we haven't much to boast of. I tell you what it is, fellows, if we are going to win that Crimson Banner, we will have to learn how to hit Arnold's pitching. He had us fairly at his mercy this afternoon."

"I don't think they outplayed us," said Percy Randall.

"Nor I," answered Ray, "but they played a stronger game than I expected, and I didn't feel at all sure of our success until the last man was out. I gave a long sigh of relief when Lewis Page gobbled up that fly ball. All we want to do is to bat stronger. If we can get the best of Arnold we can beat them any number of times. Batting is what we need to practise."

After dinner, Ray, Tony, and I were standing on the hotel piazza where a number of the students and town men were assembled. Among the former was Beard, who came forward as he caught a glimpse of Ray's face. The result of the game had not improved his disposition. He was morose and surly. At the first words of the interview, Arnold, who had been standing a short distance away, came forward and joined us.

"I suppose it would be better to write you concern-

ing the decisive game," said Ray, addressing Beard. "I do not feel able at present to suggest a date."

"I do not see any reason for a 'decisive game,'" said Arnold coldly.

"Why, what do you mean?" I asked in astonishment.

"The rules of the League say nothing about decisive games," answered Arnold. "We have the Crimson Banner, and we hold it in case of a tie. We hold it until some other college can win it from us."

"Mr. Arnold," said Ray quietly, "the rules of the League say that, in case of a tie, it can be played off according to any arrangement agreed upon between the captains of the two competing nines. Allow me to say that I arranged before the game this afternoon with Mr. Beard, your captain, that we should play a decisive game at Belmont in case of a tie."

"What!" cried Arnold irritably, turning to Beard. "Do you mean to say that you made any such arrangement?"

"I did," said Beard, looking away.

"Well, what under the sun did you — Beard, you've made a fool of yourself," said Arnold.

"As Mr. Beard is captain, and not you, Mr. Arnold, I don't see what importance your opinion can be in this interview," said Ray. "As I tell you, arrangements for a decisive game have been made. You surely can have no objections to playing the season to a satisfactory finish. You must see to what unfavor-

able criticism your refusal to play would subject you."

"We will play you when and where you choose," said Arnold, turning angrily on his heel and leaving us.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RETURN TO BELMONT

RAY WENDELL'S foresight had saved us much trouble and annoyance. It so happened that the rules of the Berkshire League made little provision in case of two colleges tying for the championship. This deficiency had entirely escaped the attention of those who had originally framed the rules; and as no tie in the competition had ever occurred thus far in the experience of the colleges, the matter had been altogether overlooked. While every student believed that tie would always be settled by an extra game, there was no definite rule requiring it. The nearest approach to it was the clause to which Ray alluded, and which provided for only such settlement of a tie as should be mutually agreed upon by the captains of the competing nines.

Of course this was intended to mean that a deciding game should be played, for the framers of the rules took it for granted that both captains would be eager to settle the championship in this way, but the rule was so unsatisfactorily worded as to leave either captain free to decline a deciding game without sacrificing the championship. The matter had not escaped Ray's

attention, and he had been sharp enough to detect this deficiency. Foreseeing the possibility of the Park men making just such a claim as Arnold advanced, he had approached Beard before the game, and had arranged the matter completely.

We were highly elated over Ray's strategic move; and that, added to the delight we experienced in reviewing our successful tour, filled our cup of joy to overflowing. All the coldness, rudeness, bad humor, and chagrin that met us on every hand during our brief stay at Berkeley could not dampen our spirits one iota; and when once aboard the train and bound for Belmont, our feelings found joyous vent in shouting and singing, till the sober passengers about us rose and betook themselves to the other cars, thinking, no doubt, that bedlam itself was off on a pleasure tour. We soon had things to ourselves, and then the fun increased until the conductor himself could stand it no longer.

"This ain't no cattle train," he said. "If you fellers wants to raise a racket, go ahead into the baggage room, and give the other passengers a show."

The noisier ones, accordingly, under Percy Randall's leadership, betook themselves to the baggage compartment at the forward end of the car, where they had free scope for their *specialties;* while several of us remained to talk our experiences over more quietly.

"I tell you what it is, Ray," said Dick Palmer, "you are a trump. Your cute little stroke with Beard was as great a victory as the game."

"What particularly pleased me," answered Ray, "was Beard's agreement to play the deciding game on our grounds. I had hardly hoped to win that point. I expected, of course, that he would reject the proposition positively, or at least that he would demand that the question of the grounds should be decided by lot. I was prepared to meet him in that demand if he had insisted; so when he accepted my proposition as I first stated it, he nearly took my breath away."

"What could have made him so obliging, I wonder?" said Dick.

"Oh, he carried the high and mighty air. He was so cocksure of winning the game that he was ready to agree to anything that depended on his losing it. He smiled in a superior way when I spoke to him, and used a condescending tone as much as to say, 'Oh, yes, I might just as well agree with you as not. It won't make any difference, for we are going to wipe up the field with you anyhow.' You may imagine, then, how he felt when Arnold called him a fool before all those fellows on the piazza of the Wyman Hotel."

"When had we better play the deciding game?" I asked.

"I don't know," answered Ray. "We can tell better after thinking it over — the later the better; for I, for one, shall be very busy during the next week preparing for final examinations. Tony!"

Tony was busily figuring in his memorandum book, and did not answer.

"Tony, what are you at there?" asked Ray.

"Oh, the accounts, of course," answered Tony. "I have been so busy with the scores and other matters lately that I have rather let them slide. They are all right now, though."

"How do we stand?" I asked.

"Over $150 still in the treasury," he answered. "Our trip has cost us less than $100, and our expenses for this season are almost at an end. Taking into account the profits we will derive from the deciding game at Belmont, we ought to have a large balance in our favor to carry over to next year."

"Well, I hope the fellows don't begrudge the money they have contributed to baseball this term," said Ray.

"That doesn't sound as if they did, does it?" questioned Tony significantly, as the distant sound of cheers greeted us — cheers that came not from the baggage room, where our companions were, but from the platform of Belmont depot, towards which we were rapidly approaching. As the train slackened speed, Percy Randall and the rest came tumbling back into the car; and we hurriedly gathered together our traps and crowded out upon the platform.

What college man who has ever played ball can forget the glad moment when, after a hard fought and successful tour, he returns to receive the enthusiastic congratulations of his fellow students; the pleasurable thrill with which he first hears the sound of their

voices; the joyous, clamorous greeting as the old familiar depot is reached; the happy, noisy throng that receives him with open arms; the shouting, laughing, singing, cheering, and the thousand other delightful details that constitute his triumph!

All this was ours; and Belmont has still to look forward to a bigger bonfire than was piled up and consumed on the old back campus that night. To be sure, our joy was tempered by the consideration that the championship was still to be won, that the Crimson Banner was still to be wrested from the hands of the Park men by a deciding game; but, nevertheless, our prospects had so suddenly brightened, our tour had been so brilliantly successful, and our success augured so well for the future, that an anticipatory triumph was quite natural and justifiable.

"We might just as well have our bonfire now, for the tour alone is worthy of it," said Clinton Edwards, when Ray suggested that perhaps the triumph was a little premature. "We can easily have another one when we win the championship. There is plenty of fuel lying loose around town. I would contribute all the furniture in my room if I thought it would be any help towards bringing the Crimson Banner back to Belmont."

These remarks were made in the lowest and hoarsest of whispers, for Clinton's voice, like those of his worthy "chorus," had perished of overwork. Once or twice during the evening when the fun raged hottest, I saw him make a heroic effort to join in the cheering, but

finding it useless, shake his head despairingly, and betake himself to banging on a big bass drum, which a member of the college instrumental club had brought into service. But Clinton and his chorus had done their work nobly that day, and no member of our nine will ever forget their timely appearance and loyal support at Berkeley.

As the hour grew late, the excitement waned, and gradually the mass of students broke up into small knots, and moved away. I was feeling fatigued from the exertions and nervous strain of the game and the evening's celebration; so, about half past ten, I went to my room, and there, lying off at ease, I watched from my windows the slow dispersion of the revelers on the campus below me until the last group had disappeared.

And long after my fellow students, wearied by shouting, had retired to their various apartments, the fire burned on in the silent night, crackling, sizzling, and darting its fitful beams into my room, where they set grotesque and fanciful shadows dancing on ceiling and walls, and blending their lurid and wavering gleams with the myriad faces and images that the day's memory recalled to my dreams.

CHAPTER XXX

BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL

FINAL examinations were now impending, and the preparation for them engaged our earnest attention night and day. The pressure upon Ray Wendell was particularly severe; for, being a Senior, his examinations took place during the first week in June. Ray, moreover, was determined to obtain a high rank in his class, and one of the honorary orations to which such a rank would entitle him. These orations were allowed to the first ten men in the Senior class, and as they were delivered on Commencement Day in the town hall before all the college faculty, trustees, and assembled guests, they were coveted and striven for as positions of marked distinction.

The valedictorian was selected by the faculty, and for the oration they chose the best speaker among the first six men in the class. It was this particular position that Ray desired; and in the estimation of his fellow students, his securing it depended solely upon him winning a place amongst the first six, for Ray was well known to be one of the best speakers in his class.

The week after our return from Berkeley, therefore, was one of steady, arduous work for Ray; and with

the exception of the regular hours of baseball practice and meal time, he was to be found in his room, bent over his text books and lecture notes. And late at night, as I would retire, I could see his windows over in Warburton Hall shining brightly long after the rest of the building was darkened.

On one of these occasions I could not resist the temptation to run over for a few moments and break in on his loneliness; so, slipping on my coat, I crossed the quadrangle, and ascended to his room.

"Hullo, Harry," he said, opening the door for me. "What are you doing out of bed at this hour of the night?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Ray, I came over here to ask you the very same question. I saw this one solitary light burning, and I was drawn to it like a bug on a summer night."

"Come in and sit down," he answered heartily. "I was pegging away at mathematics, and you know how I hate it. I was just wishing that some one would stroll in and vary the monotony when I heard your step."

"How are you making out with your preparation?" I asked, sitting down on the sofa.

"Very well. I am losing no time — at it every minute, and I think I will win my place. Mathematics is all that troubles me. You know they examine us on the past two years' work, and I find myself dreadfully rusty in my Junior year studies."

"I pity you heartily," I answered, "and I know how

you feel, for I am looking forward already to my own examinations three weeks from now. Why, that looks like a trigonometry," I added, pointing to the book that lay on the desk before him.

"It is," he answered. "I am brushing up my Junior year work, and, as I said, I find myself very rusty."

"Well, I'm not," I said, rising quickly, "for that is just what I am studying now. Here, let us tackle it together. I can help you along faster, for I have it all fresh in my mind. Besides, it will serve me for preparation for my own examination."

"Will you do that?" asked Ray.

"Why, certainly. I don't want to waste your time talking. Let us put our heads together, and I will help you finish up your Junior year work."

"All right, Harry, that's a capital idea. Make up your mind to stay here tonight, and we will do up the whole thing while we are at it. Throw off your coat, and draw up your chair. Here is a pencil and some paper."

I joined him at the desk, and we were soon deep in our work. So absorbed were we that we scarcely noticed the flight of time. It was therefore with a start of surprise that I looked at the clock as we finished our work.

"Well, who would have thought it!" I exclaimed. "I wouldn't have believed that I had been here more than two hours, and yet look at the time. It is nearly four o'clock."

I rose and went to the window. Off in the east, the first gray streaks of dawn were appearing. Over our work we had sat the night nearly through. Ray was leaning back wearily, his hands behind his head, his eyes closed.

"See here, Ray," I suddenly exclaimed, "have you been at your books this late every night?"

He did not answer me. Approaching him and looking more closely into his face, I discovered that he had fallen sound asleep, sitting bolt upright in his chair. This, in itself, was answer enough to my question. I shook him gently by the arm. He started and looked up.

"I said it was very late, Ray. Didn't you hear me?"

"Why, no," he answered. "I didn't hear another thing after you closed the book."

"Ray, you must be careful," I said. "Four o'clock is bad enough for one night, but it doesn't pay to repeat it, as I am sure you have. You will make yourself sick, and then you won't be any good, either for playing baseball or speaking honorary orations — you notice I put playing baseball first," I added with a laugh.

"Oh, don't you fear. I won't get sick," he answered. "I own I am tired, for I have been keeping late hours — or *early* hours you might call them, for a week, but then I had to in order to get in shape for examinations. All I need is some sleep and I will be as fresh as ever. This is Friday night; after

tomorrow these late hours will be over, and then I can get plenty of rest."

"Well, see that you do, for you evidently need it," I said. "Come on and get to sleep now without more delay."

"Oh, by the way," said Ray, as he rose and picked up a letter from the floor. "Here is a matter that I was just going to speak about when you suggested working together. It is a letter from Berkeley which Tony Larcom handed to me this afternoon. He has been writing the Park men about the date for the deciding game. Tony, according to my suggestion, has urged as late a day as possible. They have examinations over there almost the same time that we do, so they seemd to be quite agreeable to a delay. There has been some little correspondence concerning the matter, and this is their final letter, in which they agree to the date suggested by Tony; that is, the 21st of June."

"Why, that is the day before Commencement," I said.

"Yes," answered Ray, "and all the better on that account. It will mean a large crowd of visitors and friends. This, of course, will swell the receipts of the Baseball Association, and will give us a strong and enthusiastic backing. There will be a great many graduates here to rejoice with us if we win the championship."

"It will be a great day, and we must not fail to do ourselves proud," I responded. "Tell me frankly,

Ray, which would you rather do: win the championship, or secure the valedictory oration?"

"Now don't try to catch me that way," laughed Ray. "I shall not express any preference. I want *both,* and I intend to get both if possible."

"All right, old fellow," I answered as we retired. "I sincerely hope you will."

CHAPTER XXXI

GOOD NEWS

THE next week Ray was passing through his examinations, and I saw little of him. For several successive days he was even unable to be at the ball ground for our regular practice. By Friday, however, he had passed the last examination, and was free until commencement time. I was in a position to envy him this leisure, for my trial was just about to begin. The severest and most disagreeable tasks, however, have an end; and so, after a week's hard driving with pen and paper in the large examination hall, I too found freedom. I was confident that I had done well, and felt reason to believe that I had gained a higher rank in my class than the year previous.

Ray, though hoping for the best, could not be sure of the results of his examination, for the competition for rank in his class was very sharp, and he was working against students of great ability. The ten days that followed his examinations formed, therefore, a period of much suspense and anxiety to him. My work was finished on Friday, a little more than a week before Commencement; and that evening I determined to call upon Professor Fuller to learn, if possible, how

I had succeeded in his department. Professor Fuller often gave advance information of this kind concerning his own branch of work; and on this occasion, showed no hesitation in telling me that I had secured a grade from him several points higher than ever before. Highly pleased at this information, I was on the point of leaving the professor's house when I heard some one say,

"Good evening, Mr. Elder."

Turning half around, I saw Miss Nettie Fuller standing at the other end of the piazza. I joined her at once.

"I have been waiting for you to come out, Mr. Elder," she said; "for I have information that I know will interest — will interest some of your friends." She hesitated on the word "some."

"What is it?" I asked.

"There was a faculty meeting this afternoon, and the honormen were read off," she said in a low tone of voice.

"Yes; and Ray Wendell?" I exclaimed eagerly. "How does he stand?"

"Mr. Wendell was chosen valedictorian. He was fourth in his class," she answered quietly, but with an air of genuine pleasure in imparting such welcome information.

I could have jumped for joy.

"Is it really true?" I exclaimed. "Really settled beyond doubt?"

"Yes, my father told me this afternoon. It is to be

publicly announced to-morrow. Mr. Wendell was here last evening, and I could see that he was worrying over the matter, so I thought I would give you an opportunity to relieve his anxiety. There is no harm in his learning the news several hours in advance, and it might save him considerable suspense."

"Indeed it will," I answered warmly. "I will take the good news to him at once, for I know it will lift a great load off his mind. It is very kind of you to let him know of it so soon."

"I hardly know whether I ought to have spoken or not," she said, with a smile, "but when I saw you coming in, I couldn't resist the opportunity of telling such agreeable news. Isn't Mr. Howard also a friend of yours?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well, I don't remember all the honormen, for the names were unfamiliar to me, but I do recollect my father saying that Mr. Howard was the ninth man in his class."

"Howard!" I exclaimed in surprise. "Is he an honorman? I wouldn't have thought it. He always held a respectable position in his class, but I would never have picked him out for an honorman."

"My father said that Mr. Howard has improved wonderfully of late," replied Miss Nettie.

"Yes, he must have," I answered; "and I'm very glad to hear that he has done so well. May I tell him the news, too?"

"Yes," she said hesitatingly, "but no one else please.

I see no harm in letting them know, for father himself would have told them had he seen them this evening; but I suppose it is not my place to give the information."

"It will be all the more appreciated," I responded as I took my leave, "and I promise that no one but Ray and Howard shall know of it to-night."

I lost no time in returning to the college to find Ray Wendell. From the campus I could see that his room was lighted up; so, hurrying up the stairs, I threw open his door without knocking, and had the news upon my tongue's end when I discovered that Ray was not alone. Two of his classmates were with him; so, checking myself in time, I sat down quietly near Ray, and when the opportunity afforded itself I said in a low tone of voice,

"Come in the other room a moment. I have some good news for you."

Ray looked at me quickly an instant, and then, excusing himself, rose and followed me. His feelings may be imagined when, without a word of preparation, I suddenly popped the news upon him.

For several seconds he could say nothing. He seemed to be almost afraid to believe it. "Harry, are you sure — there can be no mistake?" he asked in a whisper, his voice trembling with excitement.

I reassured him by telling him the source from which I had obtained the information. I could only guess at the effect of my words, for the room was

dark and I could not see his face. He clasped my hand and pressed it warmly.

"Thank you a thousand times for telling me, Harry," he said fervently.

"Don't thank me — thank Miss Nettie," I answered with a laugh.

Ray said nothing, but his face, as we rejoined the others, betrayed his struggle with his feelings, and it was some time before his voice resumed its customary calmness of tone.

A number of visitors dropped in during the evening, and by nine o'clock the room was well filled with students, and echoing with the sounds of mingled conversation and laughter. In this gay group Ray's exceptional buoyancy of spirits passed unnoticed, and only I knew that his high color and sparkling eyes spoke of a happiness too complete for words.

Among the last of these visitors Len Howard came in. I was somewhat surprised at this, for he was seldom to be seen at Ray's rooms; but a short time sufficed to convince me that he had some particular purpose in coming.

He took little share in the conversation, sitting quietly on the sofa — on the same sofa and in the very spot where he had made his terrible confession to us several weeks before. As the visitors one after another departed Howard still sat there, seemingly determined to be the last to go. By eleven o'clock all had left the room except Howard, Ray, and myself. Almost before the door had closed upon the last visitor, Howard

rose up, and taking a thick envelope from his pocket placed it upon the table in front of Ray.

"There, Ray," he said in accents of genuine satisfaction, "I came in to give you that."

Ray opened the enelope in wonder. A thick roll of bills fell out.

"Why, Howard," he exclaimed, "what does all this money mean?"

"It means that I am determined you shall be repaid every cent I owe you as fast as I can earn it," answered Howard. "There is my first payment, four hundred dollars, and I will pay you the rest as soon as possible. I haven't had an easy moment until now ——"

"But, Howard," burst out Ray, "I didn't intend you to worry so about it. I meant you to take your time — why, how on earth did you raise all this money? — excuse my question, but you know you said you were in straitened circumstances."

"I understand you," answered Howard quietly, "but it is all right. I have earned it. I went to Professor Fuller for advice, and he suggested my tutoring some of the under classmen, and when I accepted the idea, he and Mr. Dykes secured me several pupils in the Sophomore and Freshman classes — fellows who were behind in their studies and needed coaching."

"Howard, you are doing splendidly," said Ray warmly. "I understand your feelings, and I admire you for them. They are of the right sort."

"Then you are satisfied with your investment?" said Howard, with a slight smile.

"Indeed I am," said Ray. 'I knew it was in you, and am delighted to see you doing so well."

"So am I, Howard," I added, "and I have some good news for you."

He looked at me inquiringly.

"The faculty met to-day, and the honormen were announced," I continued.

"Yes, yes, and who were they?" he asked, leaning forward eagerly, and breathing rapidly.

"It is all right," I said, seeking to relieve his anxiety at once; "you stand ninth in the class, and have an honorary oration."

Howard's face flushed, his head dropped, and he leaned heavily for a few moments against the mantlepiece.

"Why, Howard!" exclaimed Ray. "Is this true? I congratulate you, my dear fellow, with all my heart."

"It is true, Howard," I continued, "for I got the information through Professor Fuller."

There was silence for a second, and then when Howard raised his face, I could see that his eyes were moist.

"Oh, if you only knew how hard I worked for an oration!" he exclaimed, as if apologizing for his manner. "When Ray gave me a lift and I determined to turn over a new leaf, I made up my mind for one thing, that I would do the best I could in the little time that was left me in college. In Freshman year I

stood well up in my class, and, even since then, found no difficulty in holding a fair rank, but I was conscious of having wasted many opportunities, and having neglected my studies. I thought of my father, who knows nothing of my experience — who has all along thought that I was a model son, and has denied himself and saved at every point to secure me an education, and supply me with the money which I squandered so recklessly. I had deceived him long enough, so I determined that I would go in and work hard to secure a position of honor, in order that it might serve as some return for all that he had done for me. I was severely handicapped, but I worked incessantly, and — well — now it is all right." Howard ended abruptly, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Howard, you ought certainly to feel proud, for you have accomplished wonders," said Ray. "You have gained twelve or more positions in one term. You deserve more credit than any man on the honor list."

"I don't think so much of myself," said Howard, "for I suppose that the knowledge I have crammed into my head so rapidly will, for the most part, slip away after a few months; but it was for the old gentleman I worked chiefly — you see I am paying back my debts in every way."

"I suppose your father will come on to Commencement," I said.

"Yes, indeed. He wouldn't miss it for the world;

and I know how proud and happy he will be. I must write him a letter to-night, and tell him all about it," said Howard, moving toward the door.

"And are you sure that this does not inconvenience you?" said Ray, fingering the bills.

"Not in the least," answered Howard, as he took his leave. "It is all extra money, outside of my expenses, and it makes me easier to give it to you."

"There!" cried Ray, with a smile, as the door closed upon Howard. "Didn't I tell you he would keep his promise?"

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FINAL GAME

BELMONT was looking her prettiest on the day before Commencement. It seemed as if the town, the college grounds, the buildings, the trees, and even nature itself had summoned the pleasantest expression to greet the host of guests that thronged to the Commencement exercises. Of these exercises the great baseball game formed one of the most important and interesting in the eyes at least of graduates and undergraduates; and the special interest that centered in this game had brought to Belmont a largely increased number of friends.

We were expecting the Park men on the 11:30 train; so, shortly after eleven o'clock, Tony Larcom, Ray Wendell, and I went down to the depot with an omnibus to meet them. We were determined that no charge of rudeness or neglect should be brought to our door, so we had made provision for the Park men at our club a week in advance, and had arranged for rooms where they could leave their baggage.

They seemed to take this as a matter of course, and manifested neither by word nor act the least appreciation of the care we had taken to make them comfortable.

Long before two o'clock — the hour of beginning the game — the box office at the entrance to the grounds was besieged by a large and jostling crowd of students and graduates who had been unable to get reserved seats in the grand stand and were compelled to take their chances of a seat on the benches that flanked two sides of the diamond.

"Just listen to that, Harry," remarked Tony, as the clink of silver greeted our ears. "A great treasury we'll have to-night."

During the next quarter hour, the grand stand and benches filled rapidly; and by the time we stepped out on the field in our uniforms a double row of spectators, who had been unable to get seats of any kind, almost encircled the grounds.

We were greeted with three times three cheers, and settled down to practice in good spirits. The Park men, in their turn, received a generous greeting, and were given a chance to exhibit themselves. As we came in from the field Ray nooded to me with a pleasant smile.

"Our fellows are in good feather, Harry," he said. "If we can't beat them to-day, we never can."

At this moment the umpire came out with the new ball in his hand. Ray and Beard approached him; a few words were exchanged, the coin was tossed, and then Ray turned on his heel and came back toward me.

"They won the toss," he said. "Get your bat ready, Harry; you are first on the list."

I stepped forward to the homeplate, the Park men took their various positions; the crowd became still; the umpire tossed the snowy white ball along the ground to Arnold, then raised his hand and cried, "Play!"

Instantly the ball came in like a flash of light. I was unprepared for it, but struck at it fiercely, and to my own surprise, drove a fine two base hit out toward right field. It was an auspicious beginning, and was greeted by an uproar from the benches.

This sobered Arnold, who began more cautiously with George Ives, who followed me, and succeeded in striking him out. Then came Alfred Burnett, who knocked to shortstop, and was thrown out at first base; I in the mean time reaching third base. Dick Palmer was next at the bat, and proved himself worthy of the trust we had always reposed in his batting abilities by making a single base hit, and bringing me home, thus scoring the first run. The half inning was closed by Percy Randall's knocking a high fly which was captured by the Park left fielder. We then took the field.

I had pitched only a few balls when I discovered that the Park men had improved considerably in batting since we last met them, and that I would need all the strength and skill I could summon to manage them. They hit hard nearly every time, and it was only good fielding on the part of our men that prevented their scoring several runs in the first inning. As it was they earned one run, and the score stood 1—1. In

this condition it remained for two more innings, but in the ending of the fourth inning, their strong batting secured two more runs for them.

In the fifth inning Ray Wendell opened with a base hit, stole second base by a good run, and was followed by myself, who made another base hit which sent Ray to third. George Ives knocked a fly ball straight up in the air, which was caught by Arnold. This was unfortunate, for neither Ray nor I gained a base thereby. Then Alfred Burnett struck out — a most exasperating piece of ill luck.

The fate of the inning now hung upon Dick Palmer, whose safe hit had been so timely before. I scarcely dared hope that he would repeat his exploit, but almost before I had time to think of the matter, bang! went another base hit and Ray ran in, scoring our second run, while I reached third base. Then came Percy Randall, who struck the second ball pitched and sent it out between center and right fields.

Amidst a great outbrust of cheers, he dashed around the bases, Dick Palmer well ahead of him. I reached home in safety of course, and was expecting Dick to follow me, when, to my surprise, I saw him standing still on third base. His action was explained by the fact that the right fielder had stopped the ball sooner than we had anticipated, and had promptly passed it in to the first baseman, who stood ready to throw it home if Dick attempted to run.

Percy Randall had not seen this, but supposed the ball was still in the outfield; so, with his head down,

and not noticing Dick, he kept on running around the bases. We shouted to him in warning, but, to our consternation, we saw that he misunderstood us, and it was not until he reached third base and found Dick Palmer also there that he realized the situation. He was badly cut up about the blunder, as were the rest of us, for it robbed us of an opportunity to win the lead by securing two more runs. It was too late to be helped. Dick Palmer was promptly thrown out at home plate, and we were retired with the score 3 — 3. The loss of this opportunity was still more keenly felt in the last half of the inning, when, after one man had been put out, we found ourselves with two men on bases and Arnold at the bat.

I knew only too well that it was fatal to give Arnold a good ball, so I tried to deceive him by making a swift motion and delivering a slow ball in front of the plate, hoping that he would strike over it. I threw it too far, however, and it proved to be a good ball directly over the plate. I saw Arnold set his lips, lean back, and then I knew what was coming. He struck the ball with a terrific crack and drove it far out over the center fielder's head, where it rolled on toward the gate. My heart sank as I turned and gazed after it, for I saw there was no hope of recovering it before Arnold had encircled the bases. He made a home run, bringing in two men besides himself, and making the score 6 — 3 in their favor. It was with long faces and depressed spirits that we closed that inning.

"Well, boys," said Ray, as we walked to our bench.

"It was a bad turn, but we have four innings more and we can make it up. All the same, we don't want to let it happen again."

"No, indeed," I answered; "another hit like that and we are gone coons."

The spectators were growing alarmed as to the results of the game, and were quiet and serious. The few Park men who had accompanied the nine were, on the other hand, jubilant and noisy.

"See here, boys," exclaimed Percy Randall, coming over from the side of the field where the Park men were ranged, "we want to lay these fellows out and no mistake. What do you think they have done? They've just sent a boy to the telegraph office with a message to Berkeley, 'Score 6—3. Prepare dinner for the nine.' I overheard them give the directions. How is that for cheek?"

Ray Wendell began to laugh.

"Well, it is a pity to disappoint them, but we'll have to all the same," he said. "Here, give me my bat and see me knock that dinner into a cocked hat."

Ray fulfilled his prophecy by striking a two base hit. This was a cheerful start, and we succeeded in making two runs before the inning closed. The spirits of the spectators rose in proportion, and when we began the seventh inning with the score 6—5 in their favor the interest grew rapidly. To the delight of our friends we closed the Park men out without a run, and made one ourselves, thus tying the score.

The excitement was now intense, and remained so

during the eighth inning, in which neither side made a run. The ninth inning was opened by Percy Randall, who made a single base hit. The two men that followed him were put out, but in the mean time, Percy, by his magnificent base running, had succeeded in reaching third base. There being two men out, Percy was on the alert for the least chance to run in home. In throwing the ball back to Arnold after the first pitch, the catcher of the Park nine made a slip, and the ball rolled several yards behind Arnold. Seizing this small opportunity, Percy suddenly dashed toward home.

It was an audacious move and altogether unexpected by Arnold. A cry from the catcher, however, warned him, and in an instant he had picked up the ball and hurled it to the home plate. There seemed to be no chance for Percy, but when he was within twelve feet of the base he threw himself headlong and slid into the home plate amidst a cloud of dust. It seemed almost the same instant that the catcher caugh the ball and touched Percy.

It was a terrible moment of suspense for us. The crowd had been cheering vociferously, but suddenly ceased and hung breathlessly upon the umpire's decision. For a second there was a dead silence. Then the umpire's voice rang out:

"Safe on home."

For a few minutes it seemed as if we could scarcely hear our own voices, such an uproar arose from the spectators. The grand stand fairly rocked with the

swaying, shouting mass of people that filled it. Out around the grounds the other spectators were dancing and throwing their hats in the air. For a short period the movement of the game was interrupted, it being almost impossible to play in such confusion. Then the calm, steady voice of the umpire was heard again:

"Play!"

We made no more runs, and the last half of the ninth inning opened with the score 7 — 6 in our favor. The first batter struck a hard line hit about two feet above the ground and straight at me. I caught it neatly, but I took no particular credit to myself for so doing, for the truth of the matter was that I couldn't get out of the way of the ball. Then came a long line hit which sent the batter to second base. The next man struck out, but he was followed by a batter who secured his first base and sent the runner to third base.

This worried me, especially as I saw that Arnold was again at the bat. There were two men out, and two men on bases. If Arnold made another long hit — which he was quite able to do — the game and the championship would be lost to us. I stood fingering the ball and looking at Arnold. I had profited by my former experience, and did not try to deceive him again by an easy ball.

"I must pitch him a swift ball, and take the chances; so here goes!" I said to myself, and hurled the ball in with all my might. Arnold's bat whizzed through the air and struck the ball with a disheartening crack.

I had given up hope, and turned about in the full expectation of finding the ball landed safely out in center field. Then came the great play of the season. Ray Wendell ran desperately backward, and, with a frantic bound, leaped in the air, and *caught the ball with one hand.*

The Crimson Banner was ours!

Such a day of triumph Belmont had never known before. Throughout the rest of the afternoon, and during the evening, at the promenade concert on the campus, we were the heroes of the hour, and the recipients of plaudits and congratulations from every side.

In those proud and happy hours we reaped a golden reward for our services to our *alma mater.* Our doubts and disappointments were all forgotten in that glad season of triumph, when, surrounded by countless friends, we felt the warm clasp of the many hands extended to congratulate us, and heard our names on many lips, coupled with words of warmest commendation. And now when I think of the long hours of training we went through, the anxious days of expectation, and the exciting moments of contest, I sometimes catch myself wondering whether I would go through it all again; and then, as I think of those dear old days and that supremely happy night of triumph, every vein in my body tingles with the answer:

"Yes, a thousand times again, if Belmont needed me!"

* * * *

The town hall was crowded almost to suffocation the next day; and by the time the exercises began it seemed impossible to admit another person. I had practical reasons for knowing this, for I was one of the ushers, and was at my wits' end to dispose of the masses of people that packed the building.

The hall was gayly decorated with flags and flowers, and at the upper end, behind the stage, hung a glorious banner of crimson, with inscriptions upon it in letters of gold. The banner ordinarily would not have come to us for some little time after the game; but Tony Larcom determined that it should grace Ray Wendell's valedictory speech, and, partly by strategy, partly by bluff, succeeded in obtaining it from Berkeley in time for the exercises. Even cold Dr. Drayton could not resist a smile as he saw it hanging there; and, in his words of introduction, he alluded in a dignified but graceful manner to the victory of the previous day. From what he said I had a sneaking notion that he even went to see the game himself — a remarkable concession on the doctor's part.

There all the dear boys sat in a row, robed in their black gowns, and awaiting their turn to speak. Among the first were Clinton Edwards and Elton, both of whom delivered fine orations. Then, near the last, came Len Howard, whose oration had evidently been prepared with scrupulous care, and whose delivery was marked for its manly and vigorous tone. And as he spoke, I saw his eyes wander frequently to the third row of seats, where sat an old man with snow

white hair, who was leaning forward intently, his hand to his ear, that not a syllable should be lost, a tender smile upon his lips, and his kind eyes dimmed with tears.

And last of all came the valedictory; and as Ray Wendell, pale and handsome, stepped quietly forward and stood before the audience, a roar of applause that shook the building went up from the crowd, and gently fluttered the Crimson Banner that hung behind the speaker and gracefully framed him in.

And when the touching and pathetic words of farewell had been spoken by Ray, one further tribute remained. A messenger had come to the door during the delivery of the valedictory, and had put into my hands a magnificent basket of flowers. I hurried up the aisle, and, as Ray closed his oration and bowed, I held the flowers toward him. He blushed deeply as he leaned over to take the basket from my hands, and then for the first time I noticed a tiny card fastened to the boquet by a strip of blue ribbon, and bearing the name, "Miss Nettie Fuller."

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